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ABSTRACT

The Newspaper Division section of the proceedings contains the following 12 papers: "Diversity Efforts at the 'Los Angeles Times': Are Journalists and the Community on the Same Page?" (Richard Gross, Stephanie Craft, Glen T. Cameron and Michael Antecol); "Setting the News Story Agenda: Candidates and Commentators in News Coverage of a Governor's Race" (Frederick Fico); "The Jasper Newsboy: Reportage and Reconciliation in the Texas Dragging Death" (Barbara Friedman); "Daily Newspaper Use of Web Addresses: Longitudinal Analysis of New Content Form" (Jean M. Trumbo and Craig W. Trumbo); "Two Topic Teams and How They Grew: Education and Public Life at 'The Virginian-Pilot'" (Leslie-Jean Thornton); "A Functional Analysis of New Hampshire Presidential Primary Debates and Accompanying Newspaper Coverage" (Bryan Reber); "To Quell the Quarrels--Examining 'The Philadelphia Inquirer's' Israeli/Palestinian Coverage" (Judith Sylvester and H. Denis Wu); "Computer-Assisted Reporting in Michigan Daily Newspapers: More Than a Decade of Adoption" (Lucinda D. Davenport, Fred Fico and Mary Detwiler); "When the Shooting Stops: A Comparison of Local, Regional and National Newspaper Coverage of 1990s School Shootings" (Michael McCluskey); "Reader Mindset and Bias: A Closer Look at the People Who Say We Skew the News" (Deborah Gump); "Online Newspapers: Collating Banner Advertising with Editorial Content" (David R. Thompson and Birgit Wassmuth); "Information and Interaction: Online Newspaper Coverage of the 2000 Iowa Caucus" (Jane B. Singer); and "Talking the Talk: Expressions of Social Responsibility in Public Newspaper Grous" (Diana Knott, Ginny Carrol and Philip Meyer). (RS)

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Newspaper

Diversity Efforts at the *Los Angeles Times*: Are Journalists and the Community on the Same Page?

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Abstract

Survey data from *Los Angeles Times* editorial employees and residents of Los Angeles County were gathered to determine respondents' views of the newspaper's efforts to increase minority coverage, specifically with regard to the "market-driven" nature of those efforts. How respondents perceive market-driven journalism and the extent to which newsroom and community perceptions of it are similar were specifically addressed. Results suggest that people, whether journalists or readers, neither dismiss nor embrace market-driven journalism outright.

Introduction

In 1999, The Missouri School of Journalism and its research arm, the Center for Advanced Social Research, were commissioned by the *Los Angeles Times* to study the impact of the newspaper's ethnic and racial diversity program on the *Times'* newsroom and the perception of that diversity program on *Times'* readers.

The study took several methodological forms. Initially, scripted, taped interviews were conducted with 76 editorial staffers who volunteered to participate, with the paper's encouragement. Several questions probed the staffers' attitudes about *Times* management's motivation for the diversity program, their knowledge of market-driven journalism and the relationship between the two. Gross, Curtin and Cameron (1999) reported an initial analysis of the newsroom interview data.

A second component of the *Los Angeles Times* study was the administration of surveys to members of the paper's editorial staff and the community to determine the extent to which newsroom employees and community residents hold similar views concerning the *Times'* diversity effort and the paper's motives for effecting it. Is it intended to create a better newspaper, to improve the paper's bottom line, or both? To what extent do both groups observe the same phenomenon and agree on its motivations?

The perceptions of readers in the coverage area's many minority communities are of particular interest, given that management's stated motives are to improve coverage of minority communities and create a newsroom whose composition mirrors the diversity of the community it serves.

Background

Market-drive, diversity and the *Los Angeles Times*

The proliferation of media channels and the resulting competition among media for the same advertisers and audience members is believed to have led many newspapers to place profit high on their list of organizational goals (Demers, 1996a). Readership research has become a standard tool used to aid newspaper management in making content decisions (Schoenbach and Bergen, 1998). The *Los Angeles Times* is among the most prominent and largest newspapers in the nation that have chosen to use readership research as one way to craft a paper reflecting the concerns of that readership.

As part of the process of recasting itself, the newspaper's management has put into place a program to increase ethnic and racial diversity in the newsroom in a way that reflects more accurately its Los Angeles readership. Newspaper management is also examining the content of the paper. A more detailed explanation of that process, which relates to the changing face of Los Angeles and the changing fate of the *Times*, is reported in Gross, Curtin and Cameron (1999).

Boasting a staff of 1,100 journalists, 13 domestic and 24 international bureaus and circulation of approximately 1.1 million for the daily edition, the *Times* is the nation's largest daily metropolitan newspaper, and among the world's largest news organizations. Its circulation area is the size of the state of Ohio.

Along with its size, the *Times'* quality as journalism is equally impressive, with 23 Pulitzer Prizes awarded. In 1989, the *Washington Journalism Review* anointed the *Times* the "paper to watch for the 90s." In 1957, *Time Magazine* had dubbed the *Los Angeles Times* one of America's 10 worst newspapers; by 1964, one of the nation's 10 best. In a few short years, the *Times* had seemingly gone from worst to nearly first, growing in influence through the 1970s and the 1980s. The late 1980s were a difficult time back east, with the boom-boom of the middle of the decade having succumbed to bust. It seemed even *The New York Times* might surrender its crown to the *Los Angeles Times* as the nation's newspaper of record.

Then, quite unexpectedly, the U.S. economy paused and the bottom fell out of the California economy. At the *Los Angeles Times*, rounds of layoffs followed a hiring freeze. Some editions were trimmed, others dropped altogether. So-called "excess circulation," copies that cost more to print and deliver than they returned in revenue, was abandoned (Prochneau, 2000, p. 61). By 1995, the *Los Angeles Times* had surrendered nearly 20 percent of its 1990 circulation. Though the paper's circulation was still 1,013,000 and its circulation area was huge, large amounts of advertising revenue had been lost, along with the panache of much of its national advertising.

Then, just as quickly as the economy had soured, it again exploded with cyber-opportunity that dovetailed with the Clinton ascendance to the presidency. California's future was once again bright, and a new wave of immigrants from East and South Asia and Mexico joined westward moving job-seekers from the rest of the nation in a state whose opportunity could once again accommodate them all.

It should have been the best of times for the *Los Angeles Times*. It was not. Return on investment was stuck in the single digits; healthy, but not in line with the double-digit profit margins common in the "dying" newspaper business. Despite population growth, the *Times* did not recover the circulation it had jettisoned in the brief lean times. Its circulation was stalled at slightly over a million. Staff morale was low.

The Chandler family, which owns the Times-Mirror Company, sought help and found it in the person of Mark Willes, a businessman with no newspaper experience. He was appointed chairman of Times-Mirror. Willes holds a doctorate in economics and had been a successful manager, most recently before his appointment with the cereal division of General Mills. He was known for his attention to marketing and the bottom line.

In a controversial move, Willes appointed himself publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* in September, 1997. He began an immediate reorganization that eventually trimmed 900 *Times* employees, about 20 percent of them from the newsroom. Several sections and zoned editions were eliminated. Willes became a strong proponent of diversity given the changing ethnic and racial nature of Los Angeles, but still dropped a Spanish-language insert, *Nuestro Tiempo*. Eventually, 10 sections named *Our Times* were created for different regions of its circulation area, and a national edition of the paper began in October 1998.

One of Willes' major goals was to encourage editors and business managers working more closely on sections of the paper. A controversial idea, it has yet to be fully implemented. Willes' actions were greeted with skepticism by some (Prochnau, 2000), but he did succeed in establishing a climate at the *Los Angeles Times* in which there seemed to be less ideological separation between the newspaper's editorial and business sides (Gross, Curtin, Cameron, 1999). Willes gave up his post as publisher of the newspaper in June, 1999 after a controversial tenure during which few of the empirical business goals he had set for the *Times* were attained. Kathryn Downing, former president of the paper, assumed the post. Missteps and controversy still dog the *Times*. A

November 11, 1999 article in the *Baltimore Sun,* a Times-Mirror paper, described a Hollywood tabloid scenario at the *Times:*

> A newsroom in revolt, a scathing denunciation of senior management from a legendary former publisher, wall-to-wall condemnation from the journalistic community and readers questioning the integrity and credibility of the newspaper itself.

The article, one of many, criticized the *Times* for failing to disclose a business deal struck between new publisher Downing and the owners of the new Staples Center sports arena. The parties agreed to split $2 million in revenue garnered from coverage of the Center in a special October 10, 1999, Sunday magazine that devoted the entire 164-page issue, over 100 pages of it paid advertising, to the project. The situation was complicated by the fact that new editor Michael Parks had not been informed of the deal.

While the climate at the paper has been stormy, it appears that Willes established a market-driven orientation along with a concern for diversity at the *Times*. Circulation also has improved, though at 1,098,350 daily and 1,385,780 Sunday, it remains well below the paper's all-time highs. Current management remains supportive of market-driven initiatives.

The term "market-driven journalism" has been coined to refer to the practice of incorporating economic motivations into journalism decisions (McManus, 1994). While the newspaper of the previous half-century sought to shield editorial staffers from business decisions, often referred to by the journalists themselves as the separation of church and state (Prochnau, 2000), some contemporary journalism practitioners join these two formerly disparate parts into a newly unified whole.

Though a more common phenomenon in broadcast journalism (Curtin, 1996; McManus, 1994), the joining together of church and state in the newspaper business has yet to become a well-tilled field for journalism research, though it certainly offers fertile intellectual soil. While it may now be accepted as a business necessity, critics of market-driven journalism assert that journalism's reliance on the tools of marketing to shape content can only subvert journalism's social responsibility function (Bagdikian, 1992; McManus, 1994).

Some newspaper management, like that of the *Los Angeles Times*, expressed concern about this possibility and increased efforts to ensure social responsibility by instituting diversity programs in both the newsroom and the newspaper. The stated motive at the *Times* is to be certain the news product continues to reflect the ethnic and racial composition of the communities and citizens it serves. Now that those efforts are in place, organizational sponsors are beginning to assess the impact of their diversity programs on the make-up of the newsroom and the paper.

In 1999, the *Los Angeles Times* commissioned a study by the Missouri School of Journalism. This ongoing longitudinal study seeks in part to determine the motives journalists at the paper ascribe to the publisher's stated efforts to diversify: Is the newspaper's motive solely economic concern, is it the desire to improve the journalism of the newspaper, or is it a combination of both? Are the paper's editorial staffers supportive of the diversity effort? And, if so, why? Are readers aware of these diversity efforts, and to what do they ascribe the newspaper's motive?

Gross, Curtin and Cameron (1999) reported their initial observations from their analysis of data gathered during the study's first year interviews with 76 members of the paper's editorial staff: editors, reporters and photographers. That data demonstrate that the staffers who were interviewed overwhelmingly believed the publisher's primary motivation to be a concern for diversity itself as one element in improving the paper. Such concern, they claimed to believe, will also result in an improved business climate for the paper (Gross, Curtin & Cameron, p. 18). They saw an improved bottom line as an important potential effect of diversity.

These observations do not support the microeconomic model offered by McManus (1994). When faced with a choice that can affect *only* the financial side or *only* the journalism side of a news organization, argues McManus, business considerations will win out because the news product represents "an elaborate compromise" among the market forces creating it (McManus, 1994, p. 37). The *Times* appears instead to be dedicating resources to goals staffers believe will *primarily* improve the paper, while only secondarily improving the bottom line.

An important component of the *Los Angeles Times* study is conducting surveys with members of the newspaper's readership community as well as editorial employees. Researchers seek in part to determine how community members perceive of market-driven journalism and the extent to which their views are similar to those of the paper's staffers with respect to the paper's efforts to improve diversity. To what extent do both groups observe the same phenomenon and agree on its motivations? In a market-driven orientation, such concern is important because the paper wants to *communicate*, not simply publicize, its concern for its diverse readership. This, in turn, could result in wider readership, increased advertising and a healthier bottom line. All of which would benefit the *Times'* journalism mission. Or so the thinking goes.

It has not worked out quite that way to date for the *Los Angeles Times*. Willes' tenure often led to a focus on him and his motives rather than programs he was putting into place. Controversy in the newsroom about management programs could not be clearly discerned as being about the person or the program. Still, the newspaper's diversity program remains in place and its proponents continue to believe it will benefit the newspaper in the long term.

Research Questions

In this first consideration of survey data gathered in both the *Times'* newsroom and among its readership community, the authors address:

1) the synchronicity between *Times'* editorial staffers and Los Angeles community member's perceptions of the paper's attempts to increase revenue while improving editorial diversity;
2) whether perceptions regarding the *Times* are related to the minority/non-minority status of the respondents;
3) and whether respondents make a distinction between the motives of the *Times* for increasing coverage of ethnic groups and of newspapers more generally.

Market-Driven Journalism

The most thorough academic consideration of market-driven journalism first occurred with the publication of John McManus' book "Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?" in 1994. McManus proposes a microeconomic model of news production that draws heavily upon his own experience in the broadcast industry (Curtin, 1996). As the title suggests, McManus casts a wary eye on the possible effects of market considerations on journalism practices and product.

He offers a news model based on competition and exchange among four news "markets": advertisers, consumers, investors and sources. McManus asserts that two sets of norms – journalism (editorial) and business – govern the news business and its organizational culture (McManus, 1994). He observes that the interplay between these two sets of norms yields "the least expensive mix of content that protects the interest of the sponsors and investors while garnering the largest audience advertisers will pay to reach" (McManus, 1994, p. 85). In the McManus model, economic rationalism supplants social responsibility. Corporate considerations make it inevitable that the interests of advertisers and especially investors will always win out over those of news sources and especially consumers.

Few tests of this model have been attempted. Using discriminant analysis and in-depth interviews with newspaper managing editors, Curtin (1996) did not find sufficient support for the McManus model. Gross, Curtin and Cameron (1999) identified corporate concern for profit at the *Los Angeles Times*, but found no obvious evidence for concern among journalists who staff that newspaper.

Analysis of in-depth interviews with 76 *Los Angeles Times* editorial staff members (Curtin, 1996; Gross, Curtin and Cameron, 1999) suggests journalists' acceptance of the twin motivations of better journalism and an improved bottom line may be related to concepts known in public relations research as "hedging" and "wedging" (Stamm and Bowes, 1972). In this example, journalists *hedge* when they show a willingness to embrace both motives, at least in part. They *wedge* when they choose one motivation and eschew the other. Journalists who *wedge* would view good journalism and good business as mutually exclusive.

These considerations have received more attention in the literature on broadcast journalism, less as they operate among print journalists. Allen (1995) found that news directors at local television stations "emulate the thinking of their general managers" (p. 112), while Berkowitz (1993) asserted that there is a "business-journalism dialectic" separating those who aspire to manage the news from those who gather and prepare it.

The *Times'* environment, diversity and market-driven predictions

When applied to the print environment of the *Los Angeles Times*, it could be inferred that respondents who agreed that the paper's diversity efforts benefit both the journalism mission and business goals of the paper were seeking to "act like management," to say what was expected of those in managerial positions. They were *hedging*, perhaps fearful for their own jobs given the newspaper's recent past. Researchers found no evidence of this artifact in their interviews. The 76 individuals interviewed occupied various editorial positions and had been employed at the *Times* for varying lengths of time.

Despite the unanimity of opinion regarding the direction the *Los Angeles Times* was now taking, considerable tension in the *Times'* newsroom over the past few years has been well documented (Prochneau, 2000). Smith (1988) and McManus (1990) found evidence that conflict between traditional and journalistic values may be a source of tension in newsrooms.

Among all the interviewees, not one indicated cynicism regarding the paper's motives for enhancing diversity on either the "just for journalism" or "just for profit" side. Though no questions referred directly to their professional aspirations, none indicated motives related to personal advancement. The interview comments seemed honest, incisive and, at times, highly philosophical in tone. The following was the reply of one editorial employee commenting on management's motivation for encouraging diversity:

> The history of journalism is a tension between the idealism of the profession and the people who have worked in it…and the fact that we are a moneymaking operation. That's always driven what the newspaper is. The idea that a newspaper could be an objective source of information that citizens could rely on was itself a marketing tool used to build up circulation after years of Yellow Journalism and all that. So, I think there's a dialectic going on here. On the one hand, here there's a huge market that the newspaper has the potential (to reach). The newspaper knows that it has to respond for its own survival. Miami realized long ago that it was becoming a Cuban town. (We) are realizing that, too. At the same time, there are a lot of people who realize that it (diversity) is the right thing to do anyway. That it's more fair, more open…because those are the values with which Americans were brought up. That was what makes us a good country; that's why we should be proud to be American. We open our arms to everybody. It is both a moral and economic issue here. (Gross, Curtin, Cameron, 1999, p. 24)

Methodology

Sample and procedures

The portion of the ongoing longitudinal study reported here consists of a telephone survey administered to random samples from two populations: journalists at the *Los Angeles Times* and residents of Los Angeles County. Journalists were selected from a list of 575 staff members provided by the *Los Angeles Times*. *Times'* management encouraged all interested editorial employees to participate; however, anonymity was a condition of the research, and participants were neither rewarded for participating nor sanctioned for choosing not to participate. Community respondents were selected from a randomly generated list of 4,500 telephone numbers in Los Angeles County.

Data were gathered for 1,103 respondents, 803 from the Los Angeles community and 300 from the *Los Angeles Times* newsroom. Of the 1,103 respondents, 508 identified themselves as African American, Asian American, Latino or Hispanic, American Indian or a member of another nonwhite racial or ethnic group; 595 respondents identified themselves as white.

Interviewers at the Center for Advanced Social Research at the Missouri School of Journalism administered the newsroom questionnaire from March 22 to April 15, 1999; the community survey was conducted May 9 to July 10, 1999. Interviewers told community respondents they were calling from the University of Missouri regarding a study "about media coverage of diverse communities in the Los Angeles County area." Newsroom respondents were told the study concerned "coverage of diverse communities by the *Los Angeles Times*." Both groups of respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and told the survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. Neither group was offered any incentive for participation.

Variables

Group membership (newsroom or community) is the primary independent variable in the study. A dummy variable indicating race/ethnicity (white or nonwhite) also was created.

The questionnaire consisted of a number of items related to coverage of minority and ethnic communities by the *Times*. Three questionnaire items addressing the following issues formed the dependent variables in this study: 1) journalists' motives for covering "sensational stories about ethnic groups," 2) the impact of the *Times'* efforts to increase subscriptions on coverage of ethnic communities and issues, and 3) whether newspapers are more interested in profits than public service.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a four-point Likert-type scale, where 1 meant “strongly disagree” and 4 meant “strongly agree.” The wording of the first and second items was identical on the newsroom and community questionnaires. The wording of the third item differed in that journalists were asked whether “daily newspapers in general” cared more about profits, while community respondents were asked about the *Times* specifically.

Findings

Table 1 reports the results of a two-way analysis of variance indicating significant main effects for group membership (newsroom or community) and race (white or nonwhite) in perceptions about journalists’ motives for covering “sensational stories.” There also was a significant interaction between group membership and race. Tables and figures are in the Appendix.

Regarding the impact of efforts to increase subscriptions to the *Times* on coverage of ethnic communities, there was no significant difference between journalists’ and community members’ perceptions, but a significant difference between white and nonwhite respondents.

No significant differences between the newsroom and community or between white and nonwhite responses were found for the questionnaire item addressing whether newspapers place making money above public service.

Table 2 reports the results of pairwise comparisons evaluating the significance of mean differences in the dependent variables. These means offer a view of respondents' general perceptions of the motives for and outcomes of market-driven journalism and provide detail on the nature of the differences reported in Table 1. Newsroom respondents disagreed (M = 1.57) and community members tended to agree (M = 2.99) with the idea that journalists report sensational stories about ethnic groups more out of a desire to sell papers than a belief that such stories contain important news. Nonwhite respondents were more likely than white respondents to hold that perception of journalists' motives (M = 2.42, M = 2.14, respectively). As Table 2 indicates, the significant interaction between race and group membership is driven by nonwhite newsroom respondents disagreeing less strongly with this perception than white newsroom respondents. The mean difference between white and nonwhite newsroom respondents is significant; the difference between white and nonwhite community respondents is not significant. Figure 1 illustrates the nature of the interaction on this dependent variable.

Overall means on the dependent variable addressing whether efforts to increase subscriptions to the *Times* are having a positive impact on coverage of ethnic communities suggest no strong feelings, with responses roughly in the middle of the scale (newsroom M = 2.57, community M = 2.61; white M = 2.50, nonwhite M = 2.68). There was a significant difference between white newsroom and nonwhite community respondents, however, with the former tending to agree less with positive impact of subscription efforts than the latter.

Respondents were largely neutral, though tending toward agreement, on the item addressing the perception that daily newspapers are more concerned about profits than public service. No significant differences between newsroom and community respondents (M = 2.80, M = 2.73, respectively) or between white and nonwhite respondents (M = 2.74, M = 2.78, respectively) were found.

Discussion

In posing the research questions, the authors sought to determine whether there was synchronicity between newsroom employees and community residents regarding the impact of the *Times'* diversity program, and whether responses varied by the minority/non-minority status of the respondents. Taken together, the results support the notion that people, whether journalists or readers, neither dismiss nor embrace market-driven journalism outright.

The analysis suggests that while *Times*' journalists and members of the community sharply differ in how they perceive journalists' motives for covering diverse communities, they agree that efforts to improve minority coverage are positive. Differences emerge depending on whether the performance of the *Times* specifically or of journalism in general is at issue. Moreover, nonwhite journalists are more likely than their white newsroom counterparts to question the motives for some minority coverage.

Differences between the newsroom and community groups on the question of whether journalists pursue "sensational stories" about ethnic and minority people because such stories sell newspapers or because the stories are legitimate news were striking. Community residents, regardless of race, "somewhat agree" that journalists sensationalize stories about ethnic and minority people to sell newspapers. These differences were the strongest elicited to any question examined by the authors and demonstrate that, in Los Angeles at least, journalists may have a lot of work to do to convince the community that they are motivated primarily by public service.

Given news events in the Los Angeles area in recent years, perhaps this result is predictable. The Rodney King incident, official admission that local police planted evidence on some ethnic and minority defendants to gain several drug convictions, and evidence of racial profiling in routine police traffic stops all give Los Angeles' ethnic and minority communities reason for skepticism about social institutions, including the press.

However, this one finding aside, interpretation of the survey results is largely positive in terms of the goal most sought by the proponents of the diversity program among management of the *Times*: a favorable perception about increasing diversity across ethnic and racial lines. This should be remembered when interpreting the difference between newsroom employees and community residents on the extent to which stories are sensationalized to sell newspapers. The belief in the positive impact of enacting a diversity program in the *Times'* newsroom suggests that, over time, this is one means by which the press can be seen by the community to be reporting fairly.

Responses to the question regarding the impact of efforts to increase subscriptions also support the view that the *Times'* editorial staff considers motivations that improve the business climate at the *Times* will have a positive effect on the coverage of ethnic and racial minorities. Further good news for the *Los Angeles Times* is that the community agrees with this view, and to a strikingly similar degree for both white and nonwhite respondents.

At the same time, both newsroom and community respondents "somewhat agree" with the statement that it is profit rather than public service that is the motivation of *Times'* management in choosing to promote diversity. White and nonwhite staff members hold this view with nearly equal strength. Once again, community responses are similar, although white residents were slightly less inclined to "somewhat agree" than nonwhite residents.

It must be noted that the "profit over public service" question is worded differently on the community and newsroom surveys. Newsroom employees offered their views on whether *daily newspapers generally* emphasized profits over public service. Community residents responded to whether the *'Los Angeles Times'* specifically emphasized profits over public service. One possible way of interpreting the "somewhat agree" response to questions worded in a slightly different manner is the phenomenon commonly observed by pollsters in which politicians *generally* are held in relatively low esteem, but not *my* political representative. *Times'* journalists eye newspapers generally with some suspicion, but perhaps not their own. Community residents view the *Times* specifically with a level of suspicion similar to that held by *Times'* journalists toward other newspapers. The alteration in the wording of the question makes it difficult to interpret *Times'* journalists attitudes about the profit over public service motivation of their own newspaper, and the community residents' attitudes about profit over public service motivations of newspapers in general.

While the different question wording complicates interpretation of this finding, the results seem to concur with the analysis of newsroom interview data by Gross, Curtin and Cameron (1999). *Times*' journalists did not identify profit as the primary motive in management's decision to actively promote ethnic and racial diversity. Virtually all newsroom employees who were interviewed said management was aiding the public service mission of the paper by promoting newsroom diversity.

It is interesting to note that there is general agreement in the points of view of both newsroom and community respondents and that agreement crosses ethnic lines. Despite some skepticism, all those surveyed tend to agree that diversity efforts will yield positive results. As more cities come to reflect the racial and ethnic changes that have taken place in Los Angeles (Gross, Curtin and Cameron, 1999, p. 11), perhaps these findings can lend support to diversity efforts.

The results support the view that a new dynamic may be at work among journalists, at least in Los Angeles. They seem ready to accept the belief that good journalism and good business are not mutually exclusive, and the community appears to agree with them. Future researchers should consider possible implications of this new dynamic. As market-driven journalism gains broader acceptance, what will be its effect on the profession, its practitioners, and its audience?

The authors have now compiled interview and survey data from the newsroom of one of the world's largest news organizations, as well as survey data from a large readership pool of 800 individuals. Future research can use this data to discuss possible implications of market-driven journalism at a newspaper that may serve as the "canary in a coal mine" for the industry as a whole.

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APPENDIX

Table 1
Analysis of variance in perceived outcomes and motives of market-driven journalism, by group membership and race

Source	df	F
Sensational stories		
Group	1	391.14***
Race	1	15.22***
Group*Race	1	5.36*
Positive impact		
Group	1	0.24
Race	1	5.06*
Group*Race	1	0.02
Profits vs. public service		
Group	1	0.88
Race	1	0.31
Group*Race	1	2.06

Note: Due to the unbalanced design, the general linear models procedure was employed and the more conservative Type III sums of squares are reported. Type III sum of squares is what would be obtained if each variable were entered last into the model.

*p<.05, ***p<.001

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Table 2
Means of dependent variables by group membership and race

	Race	
	White	Nonwhite
Sensational stories		
Newsroom	1.35^{ab}	1.79^{ab}
Community	2.93^{b}	3.04^{b}
(N = 1,035)		
Positive impact		
Newsroom	2.49^{c}	2.66
Community	2.52	2.71^{c}
(N = 808)		
Profits over public service		
Newsroom	2.72	2.88
Community	2.76	2.69
(N = 994)		

Note: Entries are least squares means. The Tukey-Kramer procedure was used to adjust for multiple comparisons. Respondent agreement was indicated on four-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

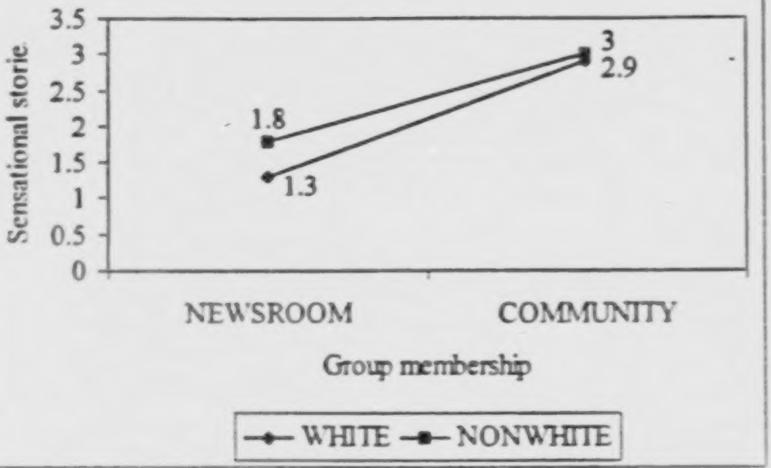
Superscripts indicate the significance of mean differences across rows and/or columns.

[a] indicates difference between column means is significant at $p<.01$.

[b] indicates differences between row and column means are significant at $p<.001$.

[c] indicates mean difference between indicated subgroups is significant at $p<.05$.

Figure 1: Group by Race interaction on motives for "sensational stories"



SETTING THE NEWS STORY AGENDA: CANDIDATES AND COMMENTATORS IN NEWS COVERAGE OF A GOVERNOR'S RACE

by

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ABSTRACT

In coverage of the 1998 Michigan gubernatorial campaign, candidates and their supporters dominated coverage in the state's nine largest dailies more than did "horse race" experts and issue experts who might have competed with those partisans to define the election. However, to a significant degree, reporters' subjective leads competed with the candidates for such election-defining power.

INTRODUCTION

Agenda-setting research has established that the relative frequency of news media attention to issues subsequently influences the public's assessment of the importance of those issues. One possible consequence of the media's agenda-setting power during an election is that candidates may have a harder or easier time mobilizing constituencies around politically salient issues. Media emphasis on some issue may also affect candidate approval, depending on whether their stances on those issues are popular or unpopular.

Agenda-setting research must therefore also be concerned with the question of who sets the media agenda. This study attempts to answer this question in an electoral context by assessing whose points of view predominated in news stories covering a gubernatorial race. Specifically, the study tries to illuminate the kinds of sources receiving attention and prominence in election news stories. Sources routinely included were the candidates or their partisan supporters, commentators on the "horse race" aspects of the election, sources included for their expertise on relevant issues, and others, oftentimes ordinary citizens, cited for reactions and opinions.

The normative assumption that voters act on the basis of candidate views presupposes that voters are first exposed to those views. But how often in campaign coverage do such partisan views get prominent and extensive attention? Do the observers, commentators and interpreters of their campaigns drown out the candidates themselves? Certainly election reporting appropriately contains interpretation and information from other sources. Experts who comment on the "horse race" aspects of campaigns are now a staple in

much coverage. Further, reporters may cite issue experts for analysis and interpretation of the possible effects of the policies candidates advocate. These sources can determine the emphasis of a story, pushing candidate agendas to the sidelines. How often then, if at all, do such issue experts get prominent or extensive coverage?

Finally, the reporters themselves can be story agenda-setters. They may frame stories by what they include or omit. Indeed, the leads they construct provide the context for all that follows, whatever other sources are subsequently cited. Journalistic norms call for reporters to keep themselves out of stories, to carefully attribute information and to follow standards for impartiality and objectivity. But how often do reporters simply strike out on their own in leads, drawing conclusions or interpretations that are more associated with analysis or opinion pieces than straight reporting?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Significance of Problem

Election news reporting has the potential to influence the decisions of large numbers of voters. This influence can be exercised in at least two ways significant to the electoral process. First, research has demonstrated the agenda-setting power of the mass media in electoral and other contexts (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). In essence, those topics given relatively more attention in the media over time come to be considered more important by the public. Campaigning candidates strive to get their "agenda" before the public, emphasizing issues they deem more likely to activate positive voter response toward them. Therefore, media coverage can influence electoral outcomes -- not just the electoral agenda -- if unequal attention is given to the policy positions and views emphasized by partisans.

Second, election news does not simply present candidate views. Those views are supplemented by other information about the veracity of candidates, interpretations of the implications of their proposals and assessments of the likelihood of their ultimate electoral success. Experts may also be interviewed for opinions on the credibility or impact of policy proposals. Research has explored the "horse race" aspects of political campaigns that are now so much a part of election news coverage. Patterson (1980) explored this journalistic emphasis in presidential elections 20 years ago. Johnson (1993a; 1993b) has examined coverage of the primary races of presidential candidates, finding "horse race" commentary related to the front-runner status of candidates. Fico and Cote (1997) looked at how "horse race" commentaries were used in coverage of a governor's election, finding that such commentary tended to supplement and reinforce partisan domination of stories.

Little research, however, has explored how other types of sources also shape coverage. For example, sources with academic credentials may be cited in stories about such topics as environmental policy, educational change, economics, welfare, religion and other issues. Further, little research has explored the degree to which reporters themselves speak in stories. Certainly most paragraphs in stories are attributed to sources included for their credibility, quotability, accessibility or relevance to a topic or issue. But reporters also frequently include unattributed paragraphs. This may occur because the information or facts referred are obvious on their face. But the reporter's own commentary and opinion may also be embedded in such unattributed assertions. The potential of the public to perceive this as news bias may influence the credibility of the press, a professional concern over the years (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Gaziano, 1988; Freedom Forum, 1997; Urban, 1998).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This research focuses on questions that seek to illuminate the source-use characteristics of election stories: What types of sources are used most often, most extensively and most prominently in election coverage? Further, this research tests plausible hypotheses that relate certain characteristics of the reporters and their news organizations to the kinds of sources they use to cover elections.

The premise of this research is that sources cited often and prominently in stories are more likely to set the issue agenda for the media that subsequently sets the public's agenda. In addition, this research assumes that stories are read linearly, from top down, and that material higher up has a greater chance of gaining reader attention than material farther down. Consequently, this research illuminates the types of sources used relatively higher in stories than others, and how often across the life of an election such sources were used more or less prominently. Certainly, the mere inclusion of sources in stories in no way guarantees that their assertions will get the attention that could influence reader agendas. The prominence of their assertions is more likely to matter: First-paragraphs leads get more attention from more readers than the following paragraphs. The first five paragraphs of a story are more likely to be read than paragraphs farther down. And the longer the story, the fewer the readers who continue to the end.

Therefore, these questions are relevant in examining election stories:

RQ1: How often were "horse race" experts used, and how prominently?
RQ2: How often were "issue experts" used, and how prominently?
RQ3: How often were partisan sources used, and how prominently?

Moreover, to what extent did reporters themselves shape the agenda of stories with their own, unattributed assertions? Specifically, how often were "reporter" assertions in leads and what were the characteristics of those leads? For instance, were leads attributable to the reporters arguably objective -- referring to facts or events easily verified by others? Or did interpretation and opinion characterize the leads? Consequently:

RQ4: How often were unattributed "reporter leads" used?
RQ5: How frequently did such "reporter leads" contain interpretation or opinion?

Last, this research explores how reporting specialization may relate to the differential use of sources who set the story agenda. Studies have found that reporting by specialized bureaus is different in quality from stories done by regular staff or wire service reporters. Specifically, legislative studies (Fico, 1984; 1985) found that reporters assigned to statehouse bureaus are more likely to use more sources and a more diverse mix of sources than other reporters are. Specialists therefore may also develop more sources able to speak credibly about a variety of issues than do reporters limited by assignment to newsrooms or constrained by the tight deadlines facing wire service reporters.

Further, it is plausible that such specialists may have greater confidence than other reporters in their ability to discern the essence of a political or state governmental issue. After all, they have spent more time than other reporters developing sources and expertise on matters of state government and politics. And with experience in that specialty, they may be given more leeway by editors to include their own judgment and interpretation in stories, particularly in leads (Fico, 1986). Consequently:

H1: Stories written by statehouse bureaus will more frequently use horse race and issue experts than will stories by newsroom-based or wire service reporters.
H2: Stories written by statehouse bureaus will be more likely to have unattributed "reporter leads" than will stories by newsroom-based or wire service reporters.

METHOD

Data Collection

This study explores these questions and hypotheses by content analyzing all hard-news stories on the 1998 governor's race in Michigan's nine largest dailies from Labor Day to Election Day. Those papers account for the vast majority of daily circulation in the state and, therefore, are most likely to influence the public agenda. Most newspapers had reporters staffing statehouse bureaus as well as newsroom reporters able to cover the election. All Associated Press stories published in these newspapers were by reporters in AP's Lansing Bureau.

The campaign pitted incumbent conservative Republican John Engler against liberal Democrat Geoffrey Fieger, best known as the lawyer for Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the assisted-suicide advocate. The study assesses sources used by analyzing the relative visibility and attention given partisan and other kinds of sources. Specifically, the attributed assertions of these sources were assessed in terms of their relative prominence and extent. For example, did the first candidate assertion in a story appear in the first-paragraph lead, somewhere in the next four paragraphs, somewhere between paragraphs six and 10, or further down?

Partisan sources are the candidates and their supporters with a direct stake or explicit advocacy position in the election. Non-partisan sources are those included in stories because of their expertise to comment on "horse race" aspects of the election or to interpret the implications or consequences of the candidates' positions. "Horse race" experts were usually associated with political polling or consulting firms, were university political scientists or were widely recognized as political experts because of their publications. Issue experts had special "standing" to speak on a topic because of their organizational affiliations, government employment or academic credentials. "Other" sources included ordinary citizens, documentary sources such as reports and poll findings. Finally, any remaining paragraphs not attributed to these other sources are considered the reporters' own direct observation, inference or opinion.

Study Measures

One aim of this research is to apply reliable and valid quantitative measures of the relative attention to assertions by candidates and others used in election reporting. This study therefore measured the space and prominence given assertions of various sources rather than subjectively judging story qualities such as "tone" or degree of "positiveness" or "negativeness." Assessing these quantitatively objective aspects of source assertions does not, therefore, require assumptions about how readers may react to them. This is also consistent with the broader agenda-setting notion that the media do not influence what people think, but rather what they think about.

Other characteristics examined include the kind of "horse race" or issue expert cited and the total number of paragraphs devoted to their assertions. Stories were coded for issues relevant in the campaign. Byline information was used to determine if a reporter working for a statehouse bureau, a regular staff reporter for the news organization or an Associated Press reporter produced a story.

A coder reliability percentage of agreement test on 5 percent of stories selected randomly from all election stories ranged from 90 percent to 100 percent for the variables on expert type and prominence of assertions (Scott's Pi tests correcting for chance agreement ranged from .92 to 1.0). Correlation coefficients used to assess reliability on measurement of the number sources used and the number of paragraphs containing their assertions ranged from .93 to .98.

Although assertions were assessed for their objectively established position and length in stories, a special analysis was conducted for unattributed leads assumed to be assertions by the reporters themselves. Although the research focused on the use of experts and partisans in stories, data collection revealed a significant number of stories introduced by these kinds of leads. This quantitative approach was therefore supplemented with a qualitative reading of these leads to discern patterns in how reporters set story agendas.

The two principal investigators of this study first independently categorized all such "reporter" leads into "objective" and "subjective" categories. Objective leads were considered those capable of independent verification by an observer. Such a lead might report that a candidate addressed a crowd during a rally, or that some group made a campaign endorsement. Subjective leads were those arguably considered to contain analysis or conclusions incapable of substantiation because opinion or judgment rather than fact was asserted. A third category of "creative" lead was also found in which reporters seemed to try to catch reader interest through bright or clever writing. The two principal investigators had a 83 percent agreement on whether a lead was objective or subjective, but a substantially lower 63 percent agreement on the specific type of subjective lead written.

FINDINGS

Some 402 stories were relevant for analysis from the nine newspapers. About 47 percent of the stories were by The Associated Press, a third by local newsroom staff and the balance by statehouse bureaus. In all, 127 stories (about 32 percent of the total) contained at least one citation to a "horse race" expert, an issue expert or both.

Research Questions

Table 1 displays data that address the first four research questions on the frequency and prominence given various sources on the election. Addressing Research Question 1, "horse race" experts were cited in 70 stories, about 17 percent of the total. On average, only one such source was cited per story, although some (less than 6 percent of the total) cited two or three. A majority of these stories did not cite a "horse race" expert until the sixth paragraph or lower. On average, less than one paragraph was devoted to the assertions of "horse race" experts, although their assertions in some stories ranged as high as 11 paragraphs.

In more than half the stories citing such experts, the source was a polling expert or representative from a polling firm. Officials from consulting firms, academic sources and political "observers" were also consulted for their expertise on the "horse race" aspects of the campaign.

Regardless of where a reporter was based or where in the state the news organization was located, three "horse race" experts dominated. Just one, the president of the Lansing polling company EPIC-MRA, accounted for more than half of such references. The other two most frequent sources were also in the capital, Lansing: a former legislator who publishes the weekly *Inside Michigan Politics* newsletter and the president of Public Sector Consultants, an issues-oriented consulting firm. Academic "horse race" experts were virtually all political scientists at nearby Michigan State University. Even newsroom-based reporters rarely quoted academic "horse race" experts from colleges and universities in their own communities.

Addressing Research Question 2, issue experts were cited in 64 stories, about 16 percent of the total. On average, only one issue expert was cited per story. Some stories contained as many as seven such sources, but only 3 percent cited as many as three issue experts. On average, less than a paragraph was devoted to issue expert assertions, but issue expert assertions ranged as high as 22 paragraphs in one story. However, fewer than 10 percent of all stories attributed four or more paragraphs to issue experts.

These sources clustered in stories about the environment (67 percent of stories using issue experts) and education (45 percent of stories citing issue experts). A much wider variety and geographic diversity existed among issue experts than "horse race" experts. A majority of stories using issue experts did not introduce them until the 11th paragraph or lower. Interest group members were most commonly cited, used in nearly 58 percent of stories citing an issue expert.

Not surprisingly, partisan sources were much more extensively used in election stories. Addressing Research Question 3, the typical election story had nearly 10 paragraphs devoted to assertions from partisan sources, and in more than four in 10 stories, partisan assertions were in the leads. In another 44 percent of the stories, such sources first appeared between the second and fifth paragraphs.

Unexpectedly, unattributed assertions from reporters were most likely to be in the leads. Addressing Research Question 4, some 59 percent of stories containing reporter assertions had them in leads (just over half of the total 402 stories). Nearly a quarter introduced such assertions in the second through fifth paragraphs (about one in five of the total 402 stories). On average, nearly five paragraphs in such stories contained assertions attributable to the reporters.

Overall, then, if leads are considered to be the major influence on the story agenda, then the reporters themselves were the most common agenda-setters. Partisan sources were the next most frequent story agenda-setters. "Horse race" and issue experts appeared in barely a third of all the stories, and even then were most frequently subordinate in prominence. Indeed, "other" sources such as ordinary citizens or documentary sources were more likely to receive more prominence than experts.

The frequency of stories introduced by the reporters' own assertions gives emphasis to Research Question 5 on the kinds of leads the reporters used.

Of the 202 stories introduced by reporter leads, about 56 percent were arguably objective assertions capable of verification by an observer. For example, a Sept. 13, 1998, Associated Press story began with this objective lead: "Gov. John Engler plans Tuesday to present his crime initiatives for a third term, building on the state's lowest violent crime rate in 30 years." In a newsroom reporter's article, the *Flint Journal* reported Sept. 11, "Once shunned by the UAW for his controversial ways, Geoffrey N. Fieger is getting the union's backing in his bid to unseat Republican Gov. John Engler." And a Sept. 23 Booth Newspapers statehouse bureau lead read: "For the first time in decades, Michigan voters will be denied the chance of seeing the two major candidates for governor square off in a formal debate."

The other 44 percent of reporter leads contained interpretations, conclusions or creative departures from objectivity.

The analytical lead was one of the three subjective lead categories discerned. For instance, a Sept. 14 Associated Press story about the candidates' criminal justice stances began this way: "When John Engler and Geoffrey Fieger discuss crime, no image better describes the differences between them than the guard towers rising from Michigan prisons." An *Oakland Press* newsroom reporter wrote this analytical lead for Oct. 11: "Oakland County school leaders want the next governor to pay for good education for all children, but leave the decisions to local districts." An Oct. 5 Associated Press story used this analytical lead: "Despite a proposal on

November's ballot legalizing assisted suicide, the emotional issue has lacked the traction of pocketbook issues in the governor's race."

The second category, reporters' conclusion leads, includes a Booth Newspapers statehouse bureau story published Sept. 24: "Democrat Geoffrey Fieger was able to draw an estimated 8,000 union workers to the Capitol on Wednesday, but he still hasn't been able to get them to open their wallets." The Sept. 11 *Detroit Free Press* used this statehouse bureau lead in an article about the impact of Fieger and President Bill Clinton on other Democratic races: "Michigan Democratic candidates are charging up the election hill with one leader who's wounded and another who's a stranger to them." A Sept. 24 article on the same topic from the *Detroit News* statehouse bureau opened with this reporter conclusion: "Geoffrey Fieger's problems on the stump and in the polls are causing fellow Democrats on the fall ballot to run *from* him, rather than *with* him."

Style leads, the third subjective reporter lead category, included this Oct. 21 Booth Newspapers statehouse bureau story about hunting and sports celebrities endorsing the incumbent: "Most hunters wear camouflage and carry guns to bag big game. Not Gov. John Engler." A *Kalamazoo Gazette* newsroom reporter's Nov. 2 story began: "There's something about a guy walking down the Kalamazoo Mall in a giant white chicken suit that makes people sit up and take notice." A *Detroit News* statehouse reporter wrote this Oct. 9 style lead: "Who says political campaigns are humorless."

Hypotheses

Given the relative infrequency of expert source use and the unexpected importance of reporters' own lead assertions, it is especially interesting that specialized statehouse bureaus were more likely to account for both.

Hypothesis 1, asserting that statehouse bureau stories more frequently cited experts than did local or wire service stories, was supported. About 30 percent of statehouse bureau stories cited "horse race" experts and 27 percent cited issue experts. "Horse race" experts were cited in only 16 percent of local stories and in only 14 percent of wire service stories. Issue experts were cited in 14 percent of local stories and in 16 percent of wire service stories.

Hypothesis 2, asserting that statehouse bureaus more frequently used unattributed leads, was also supported. Some 71 percent of statehouse bureau stories contained reporter leads, compared to 59 percent of local stories and 52 percent of wire service stories. Interestingly, 80 percent or more of stories from all three groups of reporters included such assertions somewhere in the second through fifth story paragraphs.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings suggest that candidates and their supporters dominated story agendas more than did the "horse race" and issue experts who might have competed with them in defining the election. However, to a significant degree, reporters' subjective leads competed with the candidates for such election-defining power.

Of course, news stories about elections must balance the obviously self-interested claims of candidates with other views and definitions of problems and solutions. Presumably the kinds of issue specialists cited in stories fill this role. Reporters in specialized statehouse bureaus clearly were more likely than others to help fill this need. Yet, it is unclear how valuable such commentary is when, by and large, it is characterized by its absence or obscurity. In addition to that too-frequent reluctance to include experts, the readiness of all three groups of reporters to round up the usual sources (to paraphrase the movie *Casablanca,*) especially a small stable of "horse race" experts based in Lansing, is disturbing. One likely effect is that campaign stories become Lansing-centric and fail to draw on relevant expert analysis and observation from other major cities in the state.

Further, it is even more unclear that reporters are able or appropriate to fill this story need with their own expertise. Even specialized reporters are unlikely to have the training and background to assess candidates' policy recommendations competently in terms of such qualities as their claimed importance or probable effect. But if the most frequent and prominent commentary and interpretation in stories comes from reporters, their characterization of candidates and issues must be assessed in the journalistic mix that ultimately sets the agenda of what the public considers important in an election.

Moreover, future research should assess how these leads frame electoral and other types of public policy conflict. Although few experts or other types of sources were found in this study to "lead" stories, how are their characterizations of issues or problems similar to and different from those of partisans and reporters? Further, are "reporter leads" genuinely the product of the values or biases of the individual journalists producing them? Are they the result of peer influences or "newsroom socialization?" Or are they merely passed through the reporters by partisan or other sources who have made their case so effectively that journalists accept their characterizations as obvious? Content studies paired with participant observation can help illuminate how the interactions of reporters, partisans and other sources result in story leads like those found in this study.

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Table 1: Position of First-Encountered Assertions by "Horse Race" Experts, Issue Experts, Partisan Sources, Other Sources and Reporters in Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan*

	"Horse Race" Expert	Issue Expert	Partisan Source	Other Source	Reporter
Lead	1%	5%	42%	11%	59%
Graf 2-5	43%	27%	44%	37%	24%
Graf 6-10	26%	16%	8%	23%	13%
Graf 11-on	30%	52%	6%	29%	5%
Story N	70	64	396	202	354

*Story numbers vary because a story could contain assertions from just one or any combination the sources. For example, only 70 stories contained assertions from "horse race" experts, but those stories might also contain assertions from the other sources as well.

Newspaper

The Jasper Newsboy: Reportage and Reconciliation in the Texas Dragging Death

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
83rd Annual Convention
August 9-12, 2000
Phoenix, Arizona

Presented by
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Small Town Murder, Big Time Headlines

On the night of June 6, 1998, a black man in Jasper, Texas was offered a ride by three white men who viciously beat him, then chained him to the back of their truck and dragged him three miles to his death. The murder of James Byrd Jr. and the subsequent trials of his killers attracted media attention from around the world. Reporters came to East Texas from as far away as London, Tokyo, France and Switzerland.[1] Their dispatches called the crime a modern-day lynching and Jasper "more Deep South than Lone Star."[2] In the glare of the media spotlight, locals worried about the reputation of their town, and with good reason. "The knee-jerk reaction of the national media...was to present east Texas as a white-trash outpost whose public offices are occupied by closet bigots,"[3] wrote a London reporter.

This project examines the way Jasper's sole newspaper, *The Jasper Newsboy* (hereafter: *Newsboy*), reported the crime and subsequent legal proceedings to its audience. The capital trial of John William King, the first of three defendants, galvanized city residents and serves to illuminate the unique role of the small-town newspaper. *Newsboy* coverage might suggest what the town wanted to believe about itself and what it wanted others to believe. For instance, did the racially-motivated crime reflect accepted attitudes? Were law enforcement and prosecutors up to the task of prosecuting the killers? "The great trial is often the device by which the conscience and the philosophy of society are enunciated,"[4] wrote Friendly and Goldfarb.

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[1] David Grann, "Firestarters." The New Republic (20 and 27 July 1998), 18. "Sud," a French documentary by Chantal Ackerman was released in 1999.

[2] Sarah Van Boven and Anne Belli Gesalman, "A Fatal Ride in the Night," Newsweek (22 June 1998), 33.

[3] "Black and White and Vexed As Ever," The Economist (20 June 1998).

[4] Alfred Friendly and Ronald L. Goldfarb, Crime and Publicity: The Impact of News on the Administration of Justice (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1967), 3.

The study is based on the hypothesis that *Newsboy* coverage followed a ritualistic form of reconciliation, heaping praise on those institutions impacted by the crime in order to protect reputations and facilitate healing or at the very least, restoration of the status quo. Simultaneously, *Newsboy* coverage shifted criticism to the defendants. Kirchheimer (1961) describes such a process in *The Political Trial*. "Aside from the usual gruesome thrills and their exploitation by mass media...what counts, then, is affirmation of the public order through the instrumentality of the trial."[5] Court action, Kirchheimer wrote, "is called upon to exert influence on the distribution of political power," and restore the community's "habitual feeling of security."[6]

Specifically, this study considers:

1. the presence of value-laden or opinionated statements in coverage related to the trial of the first defendant;
2. what kind of coverage the newspaper gave to actors in the first trial;
3. whether coverage favored either the prosecution or the defense;
4. and what themes regarding justice were present in *Newsboy* coverage.[7]

The Jasper *Newsboy*

The population of Jasper County, located about 100 miles northeast of Houston is approximately 33,203. The racial composition of the county is approximately 80 percent white and 20 percent black. By comparison the seat of the county, the city of Jasper, has a population of about 8,700 people, 55 percent white and 45 percent black.[8]

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[5] Otto Kirchheimer, Political Justice: The Use of Legal Procedure for Political Ends, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 49.

[6] Ibid, 48.

[7] Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, "Content Analysis" in Mass Media Research (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), 174. Wimmer describes a theme as a "single assertion about one subject."

[8] 1997 Population Data, U.S. Census Bureau.

The *Newsboy* is the only community newspaper published in Jasper. In addition to two locally-owned radio stations, the newspaper would have been a primary source of trial news for residents. The *Newsboy* is published twice weekly on Wednesdays and Sundays and typically runs less than 20 pages, with a circulation of 8,000. The *Newsboy* is part of a chain of rural papers owned by the nearby *Beaumont Enterprise*.

This study includes issues of the *Newsboy* from January 24, 1999, when jury selection began in the trial of the first defendant, to February 28, 1999 when the defendant was sentenced. From a total of 11 issues, all stories beginning on the paper's front page and related to the trial of John William King are considered. Every issue in the sample was found to contain at least one article about the trial; most issues had multiple trial-related articles. Editorials appear only in Wednesday editions; five related to the trial are included in the sample.[9] Headlines are intended to "convey the meaning of a story in a limited number of words,"[10] and so are included in this study. Value-laden words or phrases in a headline might suggest the presence of bias in the accompanying story.

Using content analysis,[11] issues of the *Newsboy* were systematically analyzed for coverage of the trial and the presence of value-laden statements as they relate to a prescribed group of actors in the judicial process:

1. the defendant, John William King;
2. prosecution and law enforcement - usually prosecuting attorney Guy James Gray and Jasper County Sheriff Billy Rowles;

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[9] Although only five editorials focus on the trial, other editorials indirectly referenced the crime and its impact on the community.

[10] Brian S. Brooks, et. al. News Reporting and Writing (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 36.

[11] Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), 43. The author wrote in favor of this research method that "the content data serve as a direct answer to the research question."

3. the defense team - usually attorney Sonny Cribbs;
4. the jury;[12]
5. Joe Bob Golden, the presiding judge;
6. the judicial process;
7. the victim's family;

Husselbee and Stempel describe a statement as "a complete thought, which normally means a subject, verb and predicate," further noting that some sentences contain more than one statement.[13] For the purpose of this analysis, each statement was coded "negative," "positive" or "neutral" in consideration of its context. For example, a statement was coded as negative if the descriptive words overtly criticized an actor or disparaged the actor in any way. A statement in the February 17, 1999 issue of the *Newsboy* which characterized the defendant as "simply evil"[14] was coded negative because it creates an unfavorable impression of King. Conversely, a statement in another issue which called Jasper County Sheriff Billy Rowles an "icon"[15] was coded positive because it suggests something complimentary or admirable about Rowles. References to "the presiding judge" or "alternate juror" were coded neutral as they do not assign connotative value[16] to either actor.

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[12] In spite of Jasper's population demographics, only one African-American was seated on the jury at King's trial. Gray explained to the Newsboy that others were disqualified because they did not support the death penalty. See for example, "Jury Selection Moves Quickly," (31 January 1999), 1.

[13] L. Paul Husselbee and Guido H. Stempel III, "Contrast in U.S. Media Coverage of Two Major Canadian Elections," Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 74 (Autumn 1997), 594.

[14] Michael Journee, "Letters Reveal King's Racist Side," *Newsboy* (17 February 1999), 1.

[15] "Pride '99 Hits the Streets Today," *Newsboy* (3 February 1999), 1.

[16] Connotation refers to the meaning associated with a word beyond its denotative definition. The meaning of a connotative word is universally understood and agreed upon. See Art Silverblatt, Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Mass Media Messages (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 311.

Statements related to the victim's surviving family were considered, as they could suggest with whom Jasper residents sympathized and how that sympathy might have shifted over time. However, descriptions of the victim were not included, as they often appeared in relation to the condition of his body when it was discovered. Such statements were not likely intended to assign value to the victim himself or comment on his lifestyle, but rather reflected on the brutality of the crime.

All statements were treated equally regardless of source. For example, when the reporter quoted an attorney who called the defendant a "peckerwood," a derogatory term for a prison inmate who allies himself with a white supremacist gang, that was treated as a negative comment although it did not overtly represent the newspaper's opinion. Reporters make a variety of subjective choices in constructing their stories. By choosing what to include or exclude, who to quote or who not to quote, the reporter is imbuing a news story with value.[17]

"Guardians of Respectability"

Examining the role and coverage of the local newspaper offers a critical means to understand the "unique ties that bind the local media to their communities."[18] Newspaper editors in particular possess a unique ability to undermine or reinforce the status quo. One researcher has called small town editors "guardians of respectability."[19] But few records exist for small-town publishers or their newspapers.[20] As a result, many studies tend to emphasize coverage by national media, in part because those sources are more easily gathered for study. Kaniss wrote "in the past, the analysis of the news media in America has traditionally focused on the national media and their influence on presidential elections and domestic and foreign policy...relatively little has been written about the local news media and the important role they play in the life of their cities and regions."[21]

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[17] Ibid, 155.

[18] Phyllis Kaniss, Making Local News (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2.

[19] Gerald K. Wells, "The Small Town Editor: Guardian of Respectability," The Southern Quarterly 19:1 (Fall 1980) , 150.

[20] Sally Foreman Griffith, Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 5.

An unpublished study by Husselbee et. al. (1999) is an important contribution to understanding the treatment Jasper received at the hands of national media covering this high-profile event,[22] but did not analyze local coverage. Historical literature on local or rural news helps to illuminate the role of a paper like the *Newsboy*; Kannis' (1991) work is one such source. Griffith's (1989) study of *Emporia Gazette* editor William Allen White illuminated the difficulties small town editors experience as a result of their proximity to the very institutions on which they are supposed to report objectively.

Scholarly work in sociology, anthropology and criminology contributes to an understanding of the cultural attitudes and dynamics of small towns. For example, Dinitz (1973) wrote that small town residents draw a sharp distinction between their communities and "the outside world," where they often believe "real problems" are generated.[23] Wright-Isak's work on small towns (1987) suggests that rural communities are neither disappearing nor being homogenized by urban encroachment, but in fact adhere to their beliefs and habits even more adamantly because of it.[24] Mullins' 1980 study on the jury system in death penalty cases helped to establish a framework for rituals of reconciliation.

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[21] Kaniss, Making Local News, 8.

[22] L. Paul Husselbee, et. al. "Framing Jasper: A Statement Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the John William King Murder Trial." An unpublished paper presented at the 1999 convention of Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[23] Simon Dinitz, "Progress, Crime and the Folk Ethic: Portrait of a Small Town," Criminology 11:1 (May 1973), 17.

[24] Christine Wright-Isak, "The Small Town as a Specific Form of Organization," American Sociological Association (1987).

A published collection of essays written by Jasper's local librarian (1993) provides information about the city's history and a depiction of residents' dominant beliefs.[25] I interviewed Michael Journee, the former managing editor of the *Newsboy*, at length on two occasions and he described the goals and limitations of his coverage of the Byrd murder. The study is also aided by the author's own familiarity with the community.[26] Coverage of the Byrd murder in national and state-wide newspapers was examined, to place the *Newsboy* into a larger context. A literature search revealed no published scholarly studies of the 1998 dragging death, of Jasper or of its local media.

Findings

Examined in context, descriptive statements in the sample revealed that the *Newsboy* characterized the *defendant* in negative terms in 81 percent of 47 value-laden references. King was referred to in a "positive" way on only one occasion, when he seemed to have calmed his demeanor in the courtroom. Neutral descriptions were assigned to King in 8 percent of *Newsboy* references, typically when he was identified as the "first of three" defendants to be tried.

In contrast, the *prosecution team and law enforcement officers* received fewer value-laden references, just 27. But 96 percent of those references described the actors in positive terms. In one article the sheriff was praised for "allowing" King to hold his newborn son for the first time.[27] None of the references in the sample could be categorized as negative and only one was found neutral.

The *defense team* received one-third the number of value-laden references as the prosecution did. Out of nine such references, four were negative, four were positive and the remaining statement was neutral. A reference to Sonny Cribbs as King's "court-appointed" attorney was categorized as negative for its connotative meaning, as was the labeling of his strategy as an "O.J. defense."[28] His "inability" to overcome the prosecution's evidence was also characterized as negative. The newspaper did, however, refer to Cribbs as "one of the best defense attorneys" in Texas.[29]

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[25] Nida A. Marshall, The Jasper Journal, volume I (Austin, Texas: Nortex Press, 1993).

[26] The author's immediate and extended families are from Jasper, Texas and continue to reside there. For a personal response to the Byrd murder, see the author's "An Explanation not an Excuse," Chicago Tribune, (28 June 1998), section 2, page 1.

[27] Michael Journee, "Jury Selection Moves Quickly," *Newsboy* (31 January 1999), 1.

The *jury* received 29 subjective references. Out of those, three were negative, ten were positive and sixteen were neutral. The *judge* in the case, Joe Bob Golden, received six value-laden references; two were positive, four were neutral and none of the statements was negative. Statements about the *judicial process*, that is, how the trial progressed and concluded, totaled twelve. Of those, two were negative and ten were positive. None of those statements were categorized as neutral.

Finally, the *victim's surviving family members* were referred to subjectively eleven times in the sample. Nine of those statements were coded positive, two were negative. No neutral statements were used to describe the Byrd family.

Reportage and Reconciliation

Although "ritual" is often thought to be a religious phenomena, it can include any formalized behavior that is repeated in a specific form. At its basic level, ritual is a form of communication. It provides a way for individuals to understand their place in the world and to regulate themselves and their environment. Rituals promote social solidarity and group identity.[30]

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[28] See respectively, Willis Webb, "Murder Defendant Writes Letter to Jasper *Newsboy*," Newsboy (27 January 1999), 1 and Michael Journee, "Prison Bred Vicious Racism," Newsboy (21 February 1999), 1.

[29] Michael Journee, "Sometimes You Forget What Covering Case Really All About," Newsboy (27 January 1999), 2.

[30] A. F. C. Wallace, Religion: An Anthropological View (New York: Random House, 1966), 233.

Transition rituals include all rituals that mark a change from one defined stage, state or position to another.[31] Most transition rituals are associated with some kind of crisis and are performed publicly. They include weddings, christenings and funerals, as well as healing rituals or rituals of reconciliation.

Newsboy coverage of the King trial could be described as one such transition ritual. Reportage was a form of communication, prompted by a crisis and carried out publicly. The point was repeatedly made that Jasper was a quiet town -- "typically non-controversial"[32] – prior to Byrd's murder. Editors and reporters sought to protect the town's image and move the community toward healing or at the very least, to restore the status quo.[33] To do this required reinforcement of the community's basic "goodness," assurances that the criminal justice system was working properly and consistent demonization of the accused who, on at least one occasion, was compared to Adolf Hitler.[34]

Mullin's study of the jury system in death penalty cases supports the notion that the *Newsboy* promoted a kind of ritualistic healing with its coverage. Mullins wrote that small towns affected by racial violence experience a distinct process of cyclical reconciliation. They begin by assuming the guilt of the accused almost immediately. The residents undergo

> a predictable emotional change. The murder escalates into a symbolic threat to the existing status quo of the community, and community members

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[31] First described by A. Van Gennep in Les Rites de Passage (London: Routledge, 1909). Translated by M.B. Uizedom and G.L. Caffee and republished in 1960 by the University of Chicago Press.

[32] Michael Journee, "Jasper Has Proved Enlightened and Tolerant in Facing Issues," *Newsboy* (24 February 1999), 2A.

[33] Telephone interview with Michael Journee, former managing editor of the *Newsboy*, March 12, 2000.

[34] Michael Journee, "King Found Guilty," *Newsboy* (24 February 1999), 1. For a discussion of media treatment of criminals, see for example Victoria Munro "Images of Crime and Criminals" (doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1999); or Alfred Friendly and Ronald L. Goldfarb, Crime and Publicity: The Impact of News on the Administration of Justice (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1967).

seem to feel that the predictability of their lives has been disrupted.[35]

The murder, Mullins continues, gives way to a "feeling of outrage and horror that spreads throughout the community." Restoration of order to their lives can only occur when the accused is brought to justice.[36] Kirchheimer wrote that "the immediate effect of the trial conviction...blends with the less tangible but more durable one of restored confidence. This is all that the guardians of the public order can and usually do expect of a criminal trial."[37]

In Jasper, the *Newsboy* had a central role in facilitating this ritualistic process. The district attorney's decision to try John William King before the other two defendants was surely a strategic one. As stated already, the murder of James Byrd Jr. received widespread coverage; many of the same reporters remained to cover the first trial. The defendant was volatile, routinely lashing out at his attorney or at Jasper residents for conspiring to convict him. From his prison cell, he wrote journalists that he was a "victim of judicial conspiracy" with every reason to fire his court-appointed attorney, and accused law enforcement officers of stealing his personal belongings. He quoted popular figures in philosophy and business management to support his insistence that he could not receive a fair trial.[38]

King's temperamental outbursts provided endless fodder for reporters. But his behavior also provided reporters from the local newspaper an opportunity to praise the work of law enforcement officers, who managed to keep an unstable and unpredictable defendant in check. Their investigation was described as "solid" but never simple, in spite of the fact that one defendant dropped a tool engraved with his name at the crime scene, then led them to the remaining evidence and co-defendants, that several eyewitnesses saw the defendants with the victim just before the murder occurred, or that DNA evidence linked the defendants to the crime scene. The "folksy" sheriff displayed uncanny powers of intuition, according to the *Newsboy*. His "gut reaction" prompted him to consult with the FBI; "the smartest thing he ever did."[39]

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[35] Courtney Mullins, "The Jury System in Death Penalty Cases: A Symbolic Gesture," Law and Contemporary Problems 43:4 (Autumn 1980), 141.

[36] Ibid. Much of *Newsboy* coverage expressed the same pathology. See for example Michael Journee, "Local Reaction to King Verdict Positive, Hopeful," (24 February 1999), 1.

[37] Kirchheimer, Political Justice, 49.

[38] King was the least contrite of the three accused men. His behavior in and out of the courtroom invited little sympathy. See the complete text of his first letter in the Newsboy (27 January 1999), 6A.

Newsboy coverage suggested law enforcement and the prosecution were "guardians of community standards"[40] who could do no wrong. With only one exception, its descriptions of the two were positive; coverage in the sample did not include any negative references. This reassures the community that they are safe and that justice will be done.

In fact, most of the institutions touched by the crime were treated generously by the newspaper. In an article about how the community was accommodating visiting reporters, a local bed and breakfast was complimented for its ability to charm outsiders. "If I could, I'd move in," said an Associated Press reporter.[41] Businesses and individuals were shown eagerly preparing the city for trial.[42]

Residents were anxious that their community not be portrayed unfavorably to the rest of the nation. *Newsboy* coverage defended the town as "enlightened and tolerant," in an ongoing effort to prove residents did not condone the crime.[43] One reason for the positive coverage by the

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[39] Journee, "Letters Reveal King's Racist Side."

[40] Mullins, "The Jury System in Death Penalty Cases," 142. The author writes that the role of the prosecutor and judge as "guardians of community standards becomes more symbolic than real in execution cases."

[41] Michael Journee, "'If I Could, I Would Move In,'" Newsboy (21 February 1999), 1.

[42] See for instance, "Sprucing Up for the Trial," Newsboy (24 January 1999), 1. A carpenter is shown repairing a gazebo outside the courthouse, to be used for press conferences. He assures the reporter that he will complete the job, even in the rain. "Despite the showers, Moore and other workers continued their work without delay," it was reported.

[43] Journee, "Jasper Has Proved Enlightened..." See also Henry Tatum, "How Can We Give Meaning to the Words 'Never Again?'" Dallas Morning News (24 February 1999), A19.

Newsboy might be that its staff is composed of locals, who share the same fears with the rest of the community. The staff had a vested interest in protecting the image of the town. The *Newsboy*'s former managing editor, Michael Journee, said in an interview:

> It makes for a tough situation, when you're trying to be objective and you've got all this emotional involvement. I hated seeing the satellite trucks and the reporters coming by all the time. Not that I didn't think it deserved the attention, but why did it have to be in my town? I felt very defensive...we were all afraid for our town.[44]

In the same interview, Journee said he believed his responsibility in covering the crime was "to report the news and to promote healing in the community." To that end, he took every opportunity to show the city at its best, and particularly to report on any efforts in the city to improve race relations.[45]

The defendant's attorney received substantially less coverage than the prosecution, and this can probably be explained by issues of access. Sonny Cribbs, King's court-appointed attorney, was from Beaumont and may have commuted for the trial, making him less available to Jasper reporters. Journee's dual role as reporter and "local" certainly would have afforded him both formal and informal access to the prosecution. The fact that he and Guy James Gray are long-time residents of Jasper suggests they were already on familiar terms. In addition, the district attorney, as an elected official, would find it beneficial to communicate with the press, particularly when the trial was going well.

By repeating Cribbs' comment that the defense team's job was a difficult one, "equal to climbing Mount Everest,"[46] *Newsboy* coverage reinforced the guilt of the defendant. If Cribbs, "the best attorney in the state"[47] according to the *Newsboy*, could not defend King, then his guilt must be undeniable. Had the *Newsboy* praised the work of the defense as it did the prosecution, or even suggested it had a sound case, the reconciliation process would have been arrested. Completion of the ritual requires the killers be brought to justice and order restored.

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[44] Journee, telephone interview, March 12, 2000.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Journee, "King Found Guilty."

[47] Journee, "Sometimes You Forget..."

For its part, the jury was given responsibility by the *Newsboy* for the "well-being of the entire community."[48] That image evolved, however. In coverage of the earliest testimony, jurors were "stoic" and "unemotional" as they viewed photos of the crime scene, in sharp contrast to the reaction of the Byrd family.[49] Just a week later, jurors were characterized as "very interested"[50] and their job became progressively more difficult, according to the *Newsboy*. The difficulty with which they reached their decision to find King guilty and then to sentence him to death, was not because jurors doubted his guilt but because they felt an obligation to "look for King's humanity."[51] This positive characterization works to assure readers that the defendant could receive a fair trial in Jasper, a notion questioned by some outside reporters' early coverage.[52] *Newsboy* coverage characterized the jurors' task and ultimate guilty verdict as a critical component of the healing process.

The presiding judge received little coverage during the trial, although when he was mentioned, it was in either a positive or neutral way. A judge does not customarily grant interviews or make public statements while a trial is underway, to avoid compromising the process. The minimum number of references to Judge Joe Bob Golden was not atypical. He was praised, however, for protecting the identity of the jurors and taking responsibility for "families looking for justice."[53]

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[48] Michael Journee, "Biggest Task of Trial Lies on the Shoulders of Just a Few People," Newsboy (10 February 1999), 2.

[49] Journee, "Letters Reveal King's Racist Side."

[50] Journee, "Prison Bred Vicious Racism."

[51] Michael Journee, "King Jurors Searched for Reasons to Give Life Sentence, Couldn't Find One," Newsboy (28 February 1999), 1.

[52] See for example Richard Stewart, "Down Home Justice in Jasper," Houston Chronicle (9 February 1999), A1.

The majority of negative statements were reserved for the *defendant*. Among 47 value-laden statements, 38 were negative and only one was positive. King was alternately portrayed as a monster, a disturbed and dangerous racist, pure evil. Given the choice between promoting King as a victim of circumstance, as the defense tried to do, or a monster with no redeeming qualities, the *Newsboy* chose the latter. Coverage emphasized his lack of remorse, disgust with his physical appearance and his volatile temper. "It is much easier to focus on the faults and failings of individuals than to try and understand the relationship between individuals, crime and social structure. Structural explanations require much more depth of coverage."[54] wrote Munro. "Images are designed to get maximum audience response."[55] By depicting King as a monster, guilty of introducing racial violence to Jasper and inviting contempt upon the city's peaceful residents, the *Newsboy* assured the ritual process of reconciliation would be completed in only one way. Only a guilty verdict would exonerate the city and restore the "typically non-controversial" status quo.

Justice as a theme was presented as an absolute necessity, something to be achieved fairly and swiftly. Residents were eager to pursue it, willing to work overtime to prepare the trial setting, to endure the related inconveniences and expenses of a capital trial. Further, *Newsboy* coverage insisted locals could mete out justice fairly, even when it was clear the jury would not represent the racial diversity of the town. Coverage consistently promoted the town's eagerness to bring the killers to justice.

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[53] Journee, "Biggest Task of Trial..."

[54] Victoria Munro "Images of Crime and Criminals" (doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1999); 207-208.

[55] Ibid, 214.

Perhaps another explanation of the *Newsboy*'s coverage of the King trial is the staff's inexperience. Journee had recently graduated college and held only one reporting job prior to this one, on another east Texas newspaper with even smaller circulation than the *Newsboy*. He had no experience covering the courts and neither he nor the editor had covered a capital murder trial.[56] Further, limited resources may have prohibited more in-depth reporting which might have promoted more objectivity, for instance, shifting some of the blame away from the defendant and to the town's historical treatment of race relations. At the time of Byrd's murder, the paper's editorial staff consisted of just five employees: an editor, managing editor, two reporters and a copy editor. Journee was solely responsible for covering the investigation and trial.[57]

However, as this analysis has shown, Journee saw his role as one of "healer" and *Newsboy* coverage of King's trial followed a predictable pattern of reconciliation. The town was deliberately defended to outsiders as one that defied southern stereotypes. Residents were portrayed as innocent victims of an outsider's brutality. Coverage assured them that the murder of James Byrd Jr. was strictly the work of an outsider, rather than an indication of any overt prejudices on their part. The Newsboy depicted a peaceful town where even the most jaded reporters, after sampling the local hospitality, might take up residence.

Law enforcement officials and prosecutors were praised and residents joined them in bringing the killers to justice. Coverage of the King trial places the blame for the killing squarely on the defendant, pure evil, a monster with no trace of humanity. Reporting of the local's "predictable" reaction to the guilty verdict and death sentence completed the process. Joyful residents called the verdict "correct" and proclaimed "justice has been done." The town was exonerated and the status quo restored.

Recommendations

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[56] Journee, telephone interview, March 12, 2000.

[57] Ibid.

Further study might consider coverage in the nearby *Beaumont Enterprise*. The *Enterprise* is a daily paper and sent its own reporters to cover King's trial. Since those reporters were not "locals," coverage may have been distinctive from that of the *Newsboy*'s and may not have emphasized reconciliation. In addition, since King's attorney was from Beaumont, coverage of the defense team may have been more prominent in the *Enterprise* than it was in the *Newsboy*. An analysis of the trial of the third defendant would also be useful in studying the relationship between hometown news and the community it serves. That defendant, Shawn Berry, was a Jasper resident and assisted the prosecution in convicting the other two; perhaps the *Newsboy* characterized him more favorably than King.

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT ANALYSIS

Front Page News

January 24, 1999

Journee, Michael, "King Trial Jury Selection Begins."

"Trial May Interfere with Tax Payments; Appraiser Says Come Early if Possible."

"Discovery Channel Airs Show Featuring Jasper, Byrd Murder."

"Sprucing Up for Trial" (photo).

January 27, 1999

Journee, Michael, "King Trial Jury Selection Begins."

Webb, Willis, "Murder Defendant Writes Letter to Jasper *Newsboy*."

"Juror Arrested for Having Handgun."

January 31, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Jury Selection Moves Quickly."

Webb, Willis, "Lawyers Have Little to Say on King Letter."

Beefing Up Security" (photo).

February 3, 1999

Journee, Michael, "List of Potential Jurors Grows Quickly."

"Pride '99 Edition Hits Streets Today."

February 7, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Jury May be Seated by Week's End."

February 10, 1999

Journee, Michael, "King Jury May be Seated Today."

"Special Parking Code Instituted for Trial."

February 14, 1999

Journee, Michael, "King Trial Starts Tuesday."

Journee, Michael, "Black Panthers Challenge Judge."

February 17, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Letters Reveal King's Racist Side."

February 21, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Prison Bred Vicious Racism."

Journee, Michael, "County, City Murder Trial Expenses Pile Up."

Journee, Michael, "'If I Could I Would Move In.'"

February 24, 1999

Journee, Michael, "King Found Guilty."

"Local Reaction to King Verdict Positive, Hopeful."

Journee, Michael, "Punishment Phase May Last Through Tomorrow."

February 28, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Death for King."

Journee, Michael, "King Jurors Searched for Reasons to Give Life Sentence, Couldn't Find One."

Editorials

January 27, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Sometimes You Forget What Covering Case Really All About."

Webb, Willis, "TV Documentary on White Supremacy is Disturbing."

February 10, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Biggest Task of Trial Lies on the Shoulders of Just a Few People."

February 24, 1999

Journee, Michael, "Jasper Has Proved Enlightened and Tolerant in Facing Issues."

Webb, Willis, "They Also Serve Who Stands and Waits Fits Jasper Now."

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH FINDINGS

John William King (defendant)	**Value**
ringleader	negative
little emotion	negative
difficult	negative
lack of remorse	negative
ringleader	negative
ringleader	negative
white supremacist	negative
racist	negative
white supremacist	negative
meanness and evil	negative
vicious	negative
"peckerwood"	negative
white supremacist	negative
proud of racist tattoos	negative
talked of inciting race war	negative
Adolf Hitler	negative
guilty	negative
expression changed little	negative
like leader of Nazi Germany	negative
defense was Herculean task	negative
condemned man	negative
defiant to the end	negative
profane	negative
contempt of tradtional morality	negative
typically unemotional	negative
connections to Ku Klux Klan	negative
theft conviction	negative
covered body with racist tattoos	negative
satanic symbols	negative
wrote racist letters	negative
ringleader	negative
monstrous, unremorseful mindset	negative
convicted of century's most heinous hate crime	negative
disturbing and dangerous	negative
(took) a horrendous path	negative
somewhat uncooperative client	negative
viciously condemning another man to atrocious death	negative
white supremacist beliefs	negative
first of three	neutral
first of three	neutral
first of three	neutral
first of three	neutral
first of three	neutral
first of three	neutral
first of trio	neutral
first of trio	neutral
calmed	positive

Total references	47	
Total Negative	38	81%
Total Positive	1	2%
Total Neutral	8	17%

Prosecution and Law Enforcement	Value	
had little to say	neutral	
discovered evidence leading to arrest	positive	
attorneys appear confident	positive	
confident	positive	
allowed King to hold son	positive	
folksy sherrif who became icon	positive	
allowed King to hold son for first time	positive	
disappointed in number of blacks on jury	positive	
pleased with jury pool	positive	
months of gathering and analyzing evidence	positive	
Gray anxious to begin testimony	positive	
ready	positive	
whole town depending on (prosecution)	positive	
sheriff's gut reaction was right	positive	
smartest thing he ever did	positive	
evidence would bear out much of his thoughts	positive	
relieved	positive	
"we got the first one"	positive	
hard work	positive	
solid case	positive	
not suprised	positive	
praise for	positive	
"proud of our D.A. and law enforcement officers"	positive	
in praise of	positive	
put horror in perspective	positive	
responsible for well-being of entire community	positive	
planning for weeks	positive	
Total References	27	
Total Negative	0	0%
Total Positive	25	96%
Total Neutral	1	4%

Defense	Value	
court-appointed	negative	
constructing an "OJ defense"	negative	
professed opponent to capital punishment	negative	
unable to overcome Gray's evidence	negative	
had little to say	neutral	
noted defense attorney	positive	
did their best	positive	
noted defense attorney	positive	
one of best defense attorneys in the state	positive	
Total References	9	
Total Negative	4	44%
Total Positive	4	44%
Total Neutral	1	11%

Jury	**Value**	
juror arrested	negative	
rather stoic	negative	
showing little emotion	negative	
prospective	neutral	
potential	neutral	
potential	neutral	
potential	neutral	
possible	neutral	
potential	neutral	
potential	neutral	
potential	neutral	
prospective	neutral	
qualified	neutral	
alternate	neutral	
potential	neutral	
alternate	neutral	
prospective	neutral	
prospective	neutral	
appointed to sit in judgment	neutral	
very interested	positive	
"all the confidence in the world"	positive	
searched for redeeming qualities	positive	
looked for King's humanity	positive	
duty to ensure...King never acts out his hate again	positive	
decision didn't come easily	positive	
jurors shed tears	positive	
"looked for ways to not have to do what we did today"	positive	
"feel like justice was done"	positive	
well-being of entire community	positive	
Total References	29	
Total Negative	3	10%
Total Positive	10	34%
Total Neutral	16	55%

Joe Bob Golden (Judge)	**Value**		
presiding	neutral		
presiding	neutral		
presiding	neutral		
presiding	neutral		
protecting jurors' identity	positive		
families looking for justice	positive		
Total References		6	
Total Negative		0	0%
Total Positive		2	33%
Total Neutral		4	67%

Judicial Process	Value	
trial that has hit a national racial nerve	negative	
trial is ordinary and bland so far	negative	
early start to trial	positive	
jury selection moves quickly	positive	
progress continues quite rapidly	positive	
list of jurors grows quickly	positive	
continued progress is being made	positive	
jury selection may be over as soon as tomorrow	positive	
jury selection has gone relatively smoothly	positive	
anything but ordinary	positive	
justice system at its best	positive	
we have justice	positive	
Total References	12	
Total Negative	2	17%
Total Positive	10	83%
Total Neutral	0	0%

Byrd Family	**Value**
more public about feelings	negative
also complained	negative
visibly upset	positive
silently wept	positive
personally felt pain	positive
relief and pain	positive
waiting for justice	positive
patience and faith	positive
hugged Ronald King	positive
grace and dignity	positive
grace, dignity and faith	positive

Total References	11	
Total Negative	2	18%
Total Positive	9	82%
Total Neutral	0	0%

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Daily newspaper use of Web addresses: Longitudinal analysis of new content form.

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Daily newspaper use of Web addresses: Longitudinal analysis of new content form.

ABSTRACT

Newspapers increasingly feature Web addresses, or URLs, in their content. This represents an interesting phenomenon in which an "old media" promotes a "new media." This analysis assesses the frequency and characteristics of the URLs featured in daily newspaper content in the US. Using a sample of articles about the Web or the Internet from 35 newspapers downloaded from Lexis/Nexis, we show that newspaper attention to the Web has grown steadily since 1994, as has the inclusion of URLs in such content. These trends show no immediate sign of abating. Most of the URLs in our sample are in the .com domain, and almost all are external to the hosting newspaper. Other results examine where in the newspaper Web addresses tend to appear, and look at the rate of dead URLs across time. We conclude with a consideration of the function of this new form of newspaper content in the evolution of new media.

Introduction

On television commercials, on billboards and buses, on blimps, and even in newspapers we are surrounded by URLs (Universal Resource Locators) — the ubiquitous Web address. Without question the Web is revolutionizing communication and the URL is here to stay. By looking at how newspeprs are using URLs, we have an interesting opportunity at the start of the century to observe what may be a transient phenomenon: the "old media" promoting what some have deemed their replacements, the "new media."

This strictly descriptive project aims to address a single exploratory research question: How have newspapers referred to the World Wide Web, the Internet and specific Web sites? To examine this question, we used the Lexis/Nexis database of newspapers to look at several things. First, we identified the sheer number of stories in the database that mention either "Internet" or "World Wide Web," but not specific web sites. This provides an indication of the amount of attention being paid to the Web or to the Internet independent of listings for specific addresses. Second, within the sample of stories specifically involving the Internet or Web, we observed the number of stories that feature listings of specific Web addresses. Third, we ask, what are the characteristics of the set of Web addresses (or URLs) that were listed in the sampled newspapers? Where do they appear in the newspaper, in what kind of stories, and from what domains? And finally, what is the shelf life of this new form of newspaper content?

Literature

Research on the collision between so-called old media and technology-driven new media has addressed various perspectives. For example, a number of studies have examined how journalists use new media technologies in the process of newsmaking.[1] Other studies have addressed how journalists use the Web as a vehicle for publication.[2]

In addition, the role of new technologies in creating so-called "convergence" among media is also addressed in the literature. Media convergence is referred to by scholars and industry experts: as a "synthesis" or "marriage," [3] a "digital revolution," [4] "digital convergence," [5]"harmonization" [6] or an "information highway." [7] These terms describe the alterations to the communication landscape made possible by the increasing linkages among the mass media, telecommunications and information technology industries.[8] The traditional distinctions separating 'newspapers' from 'books' and 'magazines,' or 'television' from 'telephone,' 'radio,' 'film,' and 'video' are blurring and have largely disappeared.[9]

While scholars and industry experts examine the influence of technological convergence on the future of journalism,[10] there is active debate about the future of traditional media. Pryor notes that some print media journalists see their own newspaper Web sites as "the enemy" or as expensive cost centers that siphon off funds from the business of reporting the daily news.[11] More optimistically, Gentry offers a case study of *The Orlando Sentinel* that illustrates the potential of technological innovation when a print organization makes a "total commitment to convergence." [12]

We have found a variety of studies and perspectives on the topic of media convergence and on the role of the Web within news organizations. However, we have found no empirical work that addresses the specific area of this study — the way in which newspapers refer to and cite Web addresses.

This is not a trivial question. An annual survey conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology offers some insight into the role that newspapers play in referring individuals to the Web. When respondents were asked, "How do you find out about new WWW pages/sites?" 63% mentioned print media — magazines or newspapers.[13] This suggests the importance of traditional media in referring individuals to the Web, but how often are Web sites referred to in newspapers? Some newspapers include e-mail addresses for writers or editors and some include URLs that promote their own online counter-parts. Our concern is determining in what context these mentions occur and to what degree these references remain viable following publication of the print version of the newspaper.

One of the potential problems with citing URLs in newspapers may be the instability of Internet addresses. Several scholars caution that there is no guarantee that a Web site will remain stationary or that its content will remain the same for any length of time.[14] One study of URL stability in scholarly scientific journals noted an 18% access failure rate over a six-month period. The authors describe these failures as "site instability" with multiple changes over the time frame of the study, or URLs disappearing completely.[15]

A 1995 article in *American Journalism Review* included comments by a number of editors and publishers about the practice of including URLs in stories, suggesting that privacy issues, the motivation of the Web author, content accuracy and decency issues were important considerations for editors.[16] The decision of whether and when to include

URLs is still an imprecise standard with style and usage rules evolving for newspapers.[17] In fact, in early March 2000, the Associated Press (AP) announced that it would begin including URLs with national news, sports, and financial wire stories. The AP "Web address advisory" describes the process and criteria:

> We will base the use of Web citations on the same principles of appropriateness, balance and authenticity that we apply to news copy. We will not provide the URLs of sites that contain pornographic, hate, irrational or grisly material, or that contain links to such sites.
>
> Where an AP story requires a balance of perspectives, we will provide such a balance in our citations, too, or limit our citations to purely objective sites. We will avoid use of product-oriented web sites wherever possible. Any citations to commercial Web pages would be based on the presence of information that goes well beyond sales material.
>
> Before a URL citation moves on the wire, AP will test it to make sure the address is accurate and that the site is appropriate to the story and our other requirements. We will be certain that the site is what is appears to be, and that it's clear who is behind it.
>
> AP will not be able to vouch for the accuracy of material on any given Net site. We can be sure, for instance, that a URL is the legitimate site of a basketball league, but we cannot authenticate the information or the statistics displayed there. In providing a URL, we are providing a navigation tool. We are not endorsing or verifying the information the site contains.[18]

While this study advances an exploratory research question, and provides simple descriptive results, there is a relevant theoretical concern that bears discussion. We advance the notion of mutually beneficial content convergence in which old and new media refer to each other's content. This cross-pollination is not without its challenges. As this study suggests, the stability of the Web as a reference is questionable and the context within which the Web is referenced in newspapers may add little to the story. As the AP notes, "In providing a URL, we are providing a navigation tool. We are not endorsing or verifying the information the site contains."[19]

Interestingly, over a decade ago McLuhan and Powers speculated on how new communication technologies (such as the Web) might replace old technologies (such as newspapers) while assuming some of the characteristics of the old technology.[20] As newspapers incorporate the URL into stories they also create new content categories (e.g., lists of URLs or *Access* magazine as a Sunday insert.)

In *The Global Village*, McLuhan and Powers suggested that the "key to all innovation is a judicious use of parallelism."[21] In their move into new media as a mode of publishing, we see newspapers demonstrating this phenomenon as they incorporate references to new media into their print form while at the same time create new media vehicles similar to print in form and content (that is, most newspaper Web sites still resemble newspapers). While this is only a partial explanation of what's going on—after all, newspapers are surely including URLs because of audience preferences as indicated in marketing research—it does nonetheless provide fertile ground for thought and speculation. Might not one also see in this trend newspapers promoting their eventual replacements and conditioning their audience to seek information elsewhere?

Methods

Two content samples were drawn for use in this analysis. For the simple count data looking at attention to the Web or the Internet in stories, a relatively fine-grained time series was developed. Those data were acquired by quarter for the years 1994-1999, with each quarter represented by a randomly constructed week (168 days sampled and collapsed into 24 data points). For these counts, we searched the Lexis/Nexis "General News, Major Papers" resource, eliminating material from papers outside of the U.S., to find the number of stories containing mention of World Wide Web, or Internet, but which excluded references to specific web sites. We used the Boolean exclusion "not" for "www." and "http:" to facilitate this exclusion. While this search procedure did exclude a number of target stories about the Web or Internet, it also excluded a trend function in this time series caused by the growth of newspaper items consisting almost solely of Web address listings. Analysis presented below demonstrates the effect of this hidden trend. Since the use of this time series is limited to a simple demonstration of the strong increase in newspaper content involving the Web or Internet, this trade-off was judged to be acceptable.

The second data collection, on the other hand, was designed to focus on the actual content of the stories involving the Web or Internet, and specifically on those stories listing specific web addresses. Since this volume of material is much greater, we reduced the number of data collection points, settling on a randomly constructed week to represent each year, again from 1994-1999. In total, 42 days were sampled, then grouped for each year. For these data, we first searched the Lexis/Nexis "General News, Major Papers" resource to find the stories containing mention of World Wide Web, or Internet (again limited to US papers). We counted these stories for each day sampled, and then further restricted the search by specifying those stories also containing mention of specific web addresses (by using the Boolean inclusion, "and" with "www." and "http:").

We again did a simple count of that restricted search, and then downloaded each of those 493 stories.

While the number of stories about the Web or Internet generally (and compared to those also featuring specific Web addresses) is an interesting phenomenon to observe, our primary effort in this article is to examine the specifics of how Web addresses from this population of stories were used in newspapers. Thus, for most of our work here, the URL is the unit of analysis. The sample yielded 1554 URLs. To construct this data set, we coded each URL for the following variables: date, newspaper, section in which story appeared (as indicated by Lexis/Nexis heading field), type of story in which URL appears (news, features, announcements, and Web site lists), the URL's primary domain, whether the URL was internal or external to the newspaper (yes/no), and the actual URL itself. All of these variables are manifest, requiring no coder judgment (all inter-coder reliabilities are 1.0).

It should be noted that this sample of URLs does not represent a sample of "all URLs appearing in US newspapers." Rather, these are the URLs that appeared in stories about the Internet or the Web. Without question, this is a special universe of content, and its characteristics need to be kept in mind when interpreting the results. We took this approach because our experience in using Lexis/Nexis for drawing a sample of newspaper URLs taught us that attempting to tap into the universe of all newspaper URLs would be highly problematic. We also acknowledge that Lexis/Nexis is itself not without issues involving inference. Certainly, other sampling strategies could be employed to sample this population—but most of them will not allow the efficiency of a computerized search or the generation of a large dataset. Since we desired a large sample of URLs representing a wide range of publications, the trade-offs seemed acceptable. Even with all of this said, we will stand by the statement that the URLs that we have collected for analysis—1554 of them from 35 newspapers across 6 years—is a fairly representative sample of the population of URLs appearing in US newspapers.

Another characteristic we wished to observe about the Web-site references in newspapers was the shelf-life of the listings. This analysis called for the construction of another time-series. There were two steps in the creation of this series. First, we returned to our data in its form prior to being condensed into constructed weeks. Each of these samples of one day's content was then allowed to stand for the entire month in which it fell. This is not an ideal method for constructing a time series, with the requirement of equal intervals. But as it turned out the actual spacing of the days was fairly uniform. Second, because not every month was represented in this construction, we filled in the missing months by additional sampling (as above) for the past 14 months. This provided a uniform and complete series from February 2000 to December 1998, and an interrupted series spanning the previous two years, back to the beginning of 1997. For the most recent end of this time series we downloaded stories from Friday, February 4, 2000, and checked them on Saturday, February 5, 2000.

For this analysis, we converted the column of URLs into "hot links" and checked all 2,058 of them, noting yes or no as to whether the link was still active and arriving at a "dead link ratio" for each month in the series. The date of publication was then compared to the date we checked the link in order to plot changes in the dead link ratio by the age of the link. All links were checked over a period of five days.

Findings

First we describe the results of the simple count of stories involving the Web or the Internet. Figure 1 displays those data, indicating clearly that newspaper attention to the online world has grown steadily since the earliest mentions in 1994. While no one would have expected this trend line to appear much differently, it is nonetheless worthwhile to observe that there has been no real indication that any kind of "saturation" has occurred. This trend data includes two dimensions: more newspapers are attending to the Web and the Internet, and those that have been on this beat for a long time are increasing their coverage. Many papers, for example, have recently initiated regular sections or magazine-style inserts that feature material about the Web.

We now turn our attention to the more interesting data that focus on the kinds of URLs being proffered in newspaper stories. First, Table 1 presents the frequency representation of the newspapers captured in our search. In this analysis we examine material from 35 publications amounting to 1554 individual URLs. The average representation for a paper is 44 URLs, so we see that the top 10 papers are above the mean with respect to their presence in the data set. Figure 2 shows the number of stories located in the search, plotted by year with the subset that also contain specific URLs indicated as well. The growth function demonstrated in Figure 1 is replicated here, but we also see (as mentioned above) the hidden trend within this coverage represented by URL listings. Over the five years observed, stories including URLs have gone from 2% of all Internet or Web stories to 25%.

In what parts of the newspaper are these URLs appearing, and in what kind of stories? Table 2 shows the breakdown for both of these questions. Going by the section indicated in the heading field in the Lexis/Nexis search, we see that the business section is by far the leader, accounting for about a quarter of all URLs. Technology or Computer sections were, not surprisingly, also near the top. The least likely place to find a URL from this variety of story in the "standard" newspaper sections was Sports. In the bottom of Table 2 we show that the typical kind of story in which one will find URLs is what we call a "listing." These "stories" are not actual stories in the common use of the word, but rather they are listings such as "best of the Web," or "featured game sites," and such. These Web address listings are themselves an interesting new phenomenon, as they take on a variety of forms. We will return to a brief discussion of these in our conclusion, as they are illustrative of a number of things about how newspapers are promoting the Web.

Where do these URLs reside on the Web? The great majority, 71%, of the 1554 addresses that appear in this search belong to the .com domain. A distant second was .org with 10%, followed by .gov with 5%, and .edu tied with .net at about 4.5% each. Various other domains accounted for the remaining 5%. This distribution of domain emphasis is strongly at variance with the relative frequency of the domains on the Web. Data from July 1999 shows that while .com was the single largest domain, it only accounted for 33% of all URLs.[22] The .org domain accounted for 1.5%, .gov for 1.2%, .edu for 9%, .net for 22%, with all others accounting for the balance of 33%. The strong representation of .com clearly indicates that, at least within the topical content about the Web or Internet, newspapers are directing their readers to sites involving commerce, rather than sites aimed more at educational or background material.

We were also curious to learn if newspapers were sending Web users to their own sites, and we expected that this cross-promotion might be a strong tendency.[23] In fact, this was not the case. Our sample shows that 92.5% of the 1554 links in our sample are external to the hosting publication, only 7.5% of the links direct readers to the newspaper's online counterpart for more information or for access to archives. Upon some reflection, this seems reasonable when you realize that newspapers with Web sites typically display their own URL prominently on the masthead and section fronts.

Finally, we look at the shelf-life of the URL listings. Figure 3 shows the percentage of live links plotted against the length of time between the publication of the link and our attempt to open it. Across the 38-month span of this time series, we see a distinct decay function of a half-percent per month, dropping from an average high of 91%. Clearly, older links are less likely to be operating. Nonetheless, we do note that three-year-old links still opened about 71% of the time. And while these data are slightly inadequate for a formal test, it appears to the eye that this series is heteroscedastic (which makes sense, as variance in the dead link rate can be logically expected to increase with time).

While this decay function is interesting, the viability of today's links is an observation with more relevance to the newspaper reader. In our sample of 95 links from February 4, 2000, we observed that 15% failed to connect the next day. In a way, this circumstance presents a new and somewhat novel accuracy issue for journalists, and perhaps especially for copyeditors. Do papers routinely check the links they publish? We note with a twist of irony that this new form of newspaper content—regardless of its other functions—has not developed without some traditional trappings:

> The Web site address for the Calendar Club of America is www.calendarclub.com. An incorrect address was published in a story Tuesday in the Cue section.
>
> — Correction from the Nov. 4, 1999, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, p. 2

Conclusion

We are in the midst of a revolution in communication, one in which many things, large and small, will change. What we observe here—the development of a new content form in newspapers—will likely be judged a relatively small change. Yet this is an intriguing development, and one with some important implications.

Will the public eventually develop "URL fatigue?" With the bulk of Web addresses appearing in print referencing commercial or .com sites, will these be seen as a form of advertising? It is easy to imagine people developing an ability to ignore any phrase that includes the term "dot." Nonetheless, the Web is not likely to diminish as a resource and those handy references to Web addresses are likely to proliferate in print media. The Associated Press seems to think so. And so do the many Sunday newspapers that now include *Access* magazine as an insert.

There is one aspect of newspaper use of Web addresses that concerns us. As described above, the strong representation of .com clearly indicates that newspapers are directing their readers to sites involving commerce, rather than education (.edu), government (.gov), or sites produced by organizations (.org). This is interesting, since one of the long-standing criticisms of newspapers is that they do not live up to their potential in terms of informal public education. Journalists have long held to the notion that they are "there to report the news, not to educate." But many journalists, particularly specialists like health or science writers, lament the lack of freedom to provide background information on complicated stories. Perhaps newspapers are missing an opportunity.

Finally, are newspapers embracing their replacements by encouraging readers to put down the paper and go online? Newspapers certainly do not need another means of losing subscribers and few newspaper-based Web sites as yet produce anything but red ink. Is it imaginable that URLs are like viruses in the pages of newspapers , no more avoidable than the flu and potentially just as deadly? Or are they a bridge to a new and different future in mass communication. Probably both, we think.

Table 1. The 35 newspapers represented, with number of URLs in search results.

	freq	%
The Atlanta Journal & Constitution	212	13.6
The Houston Chronicle	153	9.8
Los Angeles Times	117	7.5
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	90	5.8
The Tampa Tribune	81	5.2
The New York Times	79	5.1
St. Petersburg Times	73	4.7
USA Today	69	4.4
The Arizona Republic	57	3.7
The Washington Post	54	3.5
The Detroit News	42	2.7
The San Diego Union-Tribune	41	2.6
The Louisville Courier-Journal	39	2.5
The Boston Globe	35	2.3
Minneapolis Star Tribune	35	2.3
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	31	2.0
The San Francisco Chronicle	29	1.9
The Seattle Times	29	1.9
The Columbus Dispatch	27	1.7
The Denver Post	26	1.7
The Buffalo News	26	1.7
New York Daily News	25	1.6
Chicago Sun-Times	25	1.6
The Hartford Courant	24	1.5
The Rocky Mountain News	22	1.4
The New Orleans Times-Picayune	19	1.2
The Cleveland Plain Dealer	18	1.2
The Boston Herald	14	.9
Sacramento Bee	14	.9
The Indianapolis Star	13	.8
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	9	.6
Wall Street Journal	7	.5
The Baltimore Sun	7	.5
Arizona Business Gazette	7	.5
The Kansas City Star	5	.3
	1554	100.0

Table 2. Newspaper sections as listed in Lexis/Nexis where URL containing stories located (top), and type of stories in which the URLs appear (bottom).

	freq	%
Business	394	25.4
Technology / Computers	131	8.4
News	136	8.8
Feature	123	7.9
Travel	112	7.2
Metro	106	6.8
Living / Lifestyle	105	6.8
State	55	3.5
Entertainment	45	2.9
Sports	41	2.6
Various Others	306	19.7
	1554	100.0

	freq	%
URL Listing	737	47.4
Feature	648	41.7
News	75	4.8
Announcements	40	2.6
Others (obits, police, real estate)	54	3.5
	1554	100.0

Figure 1. Stories about the Internet or the Web, in constructed weeks by quarter, 1994-1999. Data from Lexis/Nexis "General News, Major Newspapers" database.

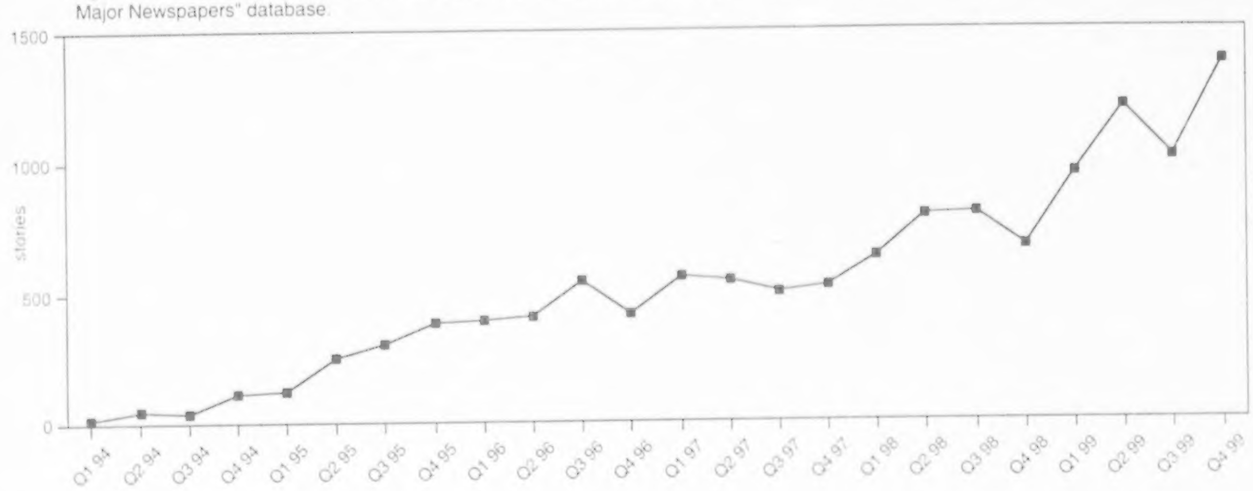


Figure 2. All stories about the Internet or Web, and the subset featuring specific Web addresses. Data from Lexis/Nexis "General News, Major Papers" database, constructed weeks by year, 1994-1999. Ratio indicated.

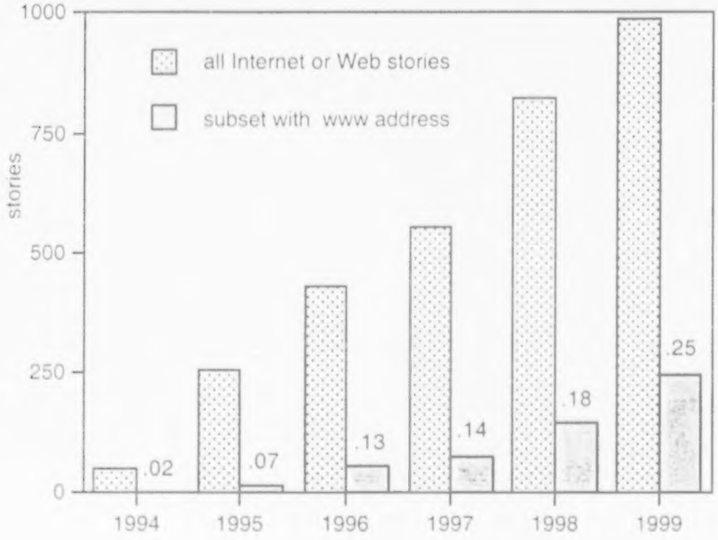
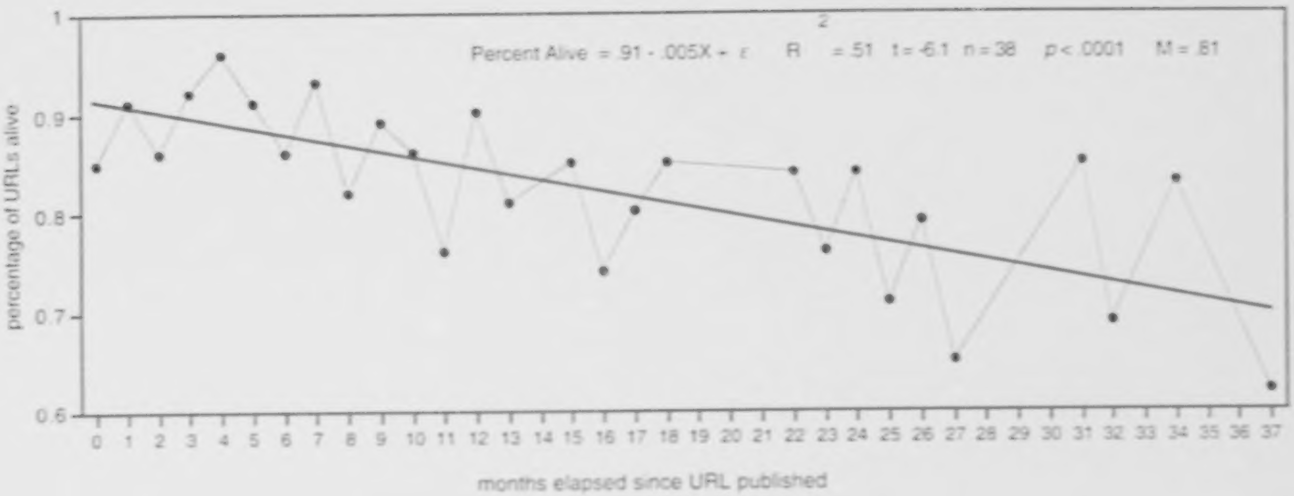


Figure 3. URL decay function.



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Two Topic Teams and How They Grew: Education and Public Life at *The Virginian-Pilot*

by Leslie-Jean Thornton

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It was crunch time for *The Virginian-Pilot* in 1991 – as it was for most newspapers in the midst of what turned out to be the worst recession for the industry in four decades. Ad revenues nationwide had slumped. Newsprint costs were high and getting higher. There was growing pressure to do more with less. Circulation throughout the country had been in a 40-year decline in terms of market penetration.

At the *Pilot*, there was a general sense that the paper could be better editorially and needed help getting there. As early as 1986, then-Executive Editor Sandra Mims Rowe[1] was actively casting about for ways to improve the paper and its prospects; she sent a member of the news leadership group[2] on a search to see if the current business fondness for team management was being adopted by newspapers. If so, did it look like an option for the *Pilot*? He looked; he found the only beginnings of a useful *Pilot* model in Charlotte, N.C., at *The Observer*, where the human resources department was developing ways to use team management throughout the paper.[3] Rowe moved on in her quest, but the idea lingered in the background and grew.

Meanwhile, geography was becoming particularly irksome for Landmark Communications' flagship paper. *The Pilot*, with a circulation then at about 250,000, covered five cities, two outlying counties and a wide geographic area cut off from the main coverage area by the Chesapeake Bay.[4] The *Pilot* had a long history of basing reporters in the geographic area they covered, but with such a wide area, this had proved troublesome and costly. By spring 1991, a task force of two assistant managing editors aided by three city editors and a staff reporter concluded: "There is full agreement that the existing structure of, in effect, autonomous offices is inefficient, requires heavy staffing and fails to provide consistently strong coverage for the mainsheet."[5]

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[1] Sandra Mims Rowe left *The Virginian-Pilot* in spring 1993 to become executive editor of *The* (Portland) *Oregonian*, where she is now. Rowe instituted a team structure at *The Oregonian* in 1993-94.

[2] Randy Jessee, news systems editor.

[3] According to Daniel Shaver, human resources manager at the time, *The Observer* was preparing to send team-management consultants to other papers. The person Randy Jessee consulted was Dolly King-Weathersbee, who worked in that office. *The Observer* went to a team-based newsroom in 1995, Shaver said.

[4] Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Chesapeake were and are the cities with the *Pilot*'s primary attention. Together, they are known as South Hampton Roads. The *Pilot* is based in Norfolk, Va. At the time, the paper was also covering Isle of Wight and South Hampton counties, with reporters stationed in Franklin and Smithfield, and the Peninsula region of eastern Virginia. The *Pilot* was the third paper of choice in Isle of Wight County, behind *The Daily Press* and the *Smithfield Times*. This information is from a June 19, 1991, memo prepared by Dennis A. Hartig and Gerald P. Merrell, *Virginian-Pilot* assistant managing editors at the time. The *Pilot* also covers a portion of the Outer Banks in North Carolina, but staffing for that bureau is separate from that for the main paper.

Full and immediate consolidation, however, was not advised. Such a move, it was thought, would cause "swift and lasting damage to our relationships with the communities."[6] A partial consolidation was suggested. It would avoid the perceptions that the paper had abandoned the cities. It would reflect the paper's efforts to "streamline operations, provide better coordination and planning, provide more of a regional and interesting report that does not rely as heavily on processed news."[7] But most importantly, in terms of the genesis of teams at *The Virginian-Pilot*, the thinking had come to this point:

> This proposal, we believe, provides benefits by creating a true team of editors; pooling some functions now handled separately by most of the offices; establishing a pool of reporters to be used in more efficient and productive ways and putting a group of editorial assistants to better use. ... But the proposal goes beyond simply moving people around. It includes what we believe to be a more realistic approach to coverage in areas that historically have posed problems for us. We have made several assumptions... First, we assume there will be the creation of an education team ... (and) we assume that social services will be eliminated as a necessary beat in the individual cities and somehow consolidated into a regional beat.[8]

Bringing business into the newsroom

Although U.S. businesses had been using variations on the team management model for years and were particularly enthusiastic about Total Quality Management, a system introduced by Joseph Juran and W. Edwards Deming[9] in the 1980s, the newspaper industry had not joined in.

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] It is W. Edwards Deming's name that is most associated with this movement. Deming, a Yale graduate in mathematical physics, began his career applying statistics to physics and physical properties of matter, but gradually broadened the applications. He was involved in the initial research in sampling and became head mathematician at the U.S. Census Bureau in 1939. It was there that he began to use quality control methods in a non-manufacturing environment. As a consultant to the War Department, Deming consulted in Japan from 1950 through 1956. He became highly influential there. In 1980, an NBC white paper prominently

The Virginian-Pilot was in the forefront of exploring teams as a form of newsroom-wide structure. Traditional newsroom structure manages from the top down. Team newsrooms have flattened hierarchies[10] and manage more from the bottom up, with teams of reporters and editors deciding the coverage and forwarding it to higher-ranking editors rather than the other way around.

In the mid-1990s, industry publications were still introducing this newsroom phenomenon.[11] But in 1999, an academic survey[12] found that some 37 percent of U.S. newspapers with a daily circulation of 25,000 or more had a partial or full team system in place. Only 8 percent of those reporting said that their newspapers had started any use of teams by 1992. By 1995, the use of teams in some form was up to 28 percent. Further, the survey results were used to predict that by the end of 1999, 42 percent of U.S. newspapers with a daily circulation of 25,000 or more would have a team structure in place.

Experiments

The *Pilot* launched three "organizational experiments"[13] in the summer of 1991. The Education Team, with Rosemary Armao[14] as its first team leader, was most successful. The two

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featured Deming, detailing his effect on Japan's economic transformation. It was then that U.S. businesses began to take note and Deming's ideas became much in demand. Rafael Aguayo, *Dr. Deming: The American who taught the Japanese about quality* (New York: Fireside, Simon & Schuster, 1991).

[10] See *Appendix* for organizational charts showing the way education and public life (government) reporters fit into *The Virginian-Pilot* newsroom before and after the teams were established.

[11] Among the articles are "A brand new ballgame: The changes in the *Oregonian*," Linda Fibich, *American Journalism Review* 16, no. 9 (November 1994): 28; "Newsroom Circles (Special Report: Editing the News)," Scott Johnson, *The Quill* 81 no. 2 (March 1993): 28; "Reinventing the Wheel: Newsroom reorganization at the *Dayton Daily News* in Ohio," Hugh Morgan, *The Quill* 82, no. 4 (May 1994): 34; and "Reinventing the newsroom," Carl Sessions Stepp, *American Journalism Review* (April 1995): 28.

[12] Ann B. Schierhorn, Fred F. Endres and Carl Schierhorn, "Newsroom Teams: A baseline study of prevalence, organization and effectiveness" (paper presented at the annual convention of AEJMC in New Orleans, 4 August 1999). The survey consisted of an eight-page, pre-tested questionnaire sent to the managing editors of 455 newspapers listed in the 1998 Editor and Publisher Yearbook. The original mailing was in January 1999 with a reminder in February. One hundred ninety-two usable questionnaires were returned (42.2 percent). There was a sample error of +/-5.1 percent at a 95 percent confidence rate. The one substantive question asked of all respondents ("Do you have newsroom teams?") was significant by chi square analysis ($p<.004$).

[13] Dennis Hartig, interview with author, *The Virginian-Pilot*, Norfolk, Va., 14 October 1999.

[14] Rosemary Armao is currently the managing editor of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*. Prior to joining the Florida paper, she was the *Baltimore Sun*'s Anne Arundel County bureau chief. After leaving *The Virginian-Pilot*, Armao was executive director of the Investigative Reporters & Editors organization.

other experiments with team structure – a Flex Team led by Dave Addis and a Tri-Cities team led by Gerry Merrill – didn't coalesce in the way the *Pilot* was looking for and were dropped. A year later, the *Pilot* created the Public Life Team. It was modeled to some degree on the Education Team – there was no other model at the *Pilot* – but also drew on Deming's TQM and Continuous Improvement principles, which were introduced into all Landmark properties after the Education Team had been formed. Tom Warhover was the team's first leader. The team later grew to public prominence through its involvement with public journalism.

This paper examines the birth and some of the growth of the Education and Public Life teams, which are still vital and vibrant parts of the *Pilot's* newsroom. They have been joined there by some 25 other teams of varying kinds. The purpose of this paper is to develop context regarding how and why these teams were formed, and how they changed in reaction to some of the challenges they met.

A great deal is known about traditional newsrooms, about the news they produce and the effects they create. Little is known about newsroom teams. It is not beyond possibility that in a year or so, half or more of the nation's significant daily newspapers will have a team structure. The study of teams is vitally important as newspapers struggle to retain and gain readers, meet expanding profit demands and regroup in terms of online expansion or competition.

Literature review

In newsrooms

The small amount of scholarly work done to date on the subject of teams is valuable and intriguing. The 1999 Scheirhorn, Endres and Scheirhorn[15] survey sets an academic baseline in telling us how many newspapers use team structures.[16] Work done by John T. Russial[17] focuses on *The Oregonian*, and research by Kathleen Hansen, Mark Neuzil and Jean Ward[18] focuses on the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Star Tribune* in St. Paul, Minn. *The Virginian-Pilot*'s use of teams predates the existence of teams on all of these papers.

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[15] The three researchers are at Kent State University.

[16] An earlier study, conducted under the Editorial Leadership Initiative of NMC at Northwestern University, was less formal in its approach and was written for newspaper professionals: *Inside Newsroom Teams: An Editor's Guide to the Promise and Problems*. Gary Graham and Tracy Thompson (Evanston, Illinois: NMC, 1997). It is particularly valuable to this research in that it lists the years in which each of 47 U.S. newspapers began the use of team structures.

Russial detailed the work of *The Oregonian*'s first topic team, the Health & Science Team, when it had been in existence for about a year.[19] His first content analysis of health and science stories covered from June 1, 1992, to May 31, 1993, before the team formed and Rowe took over as executive editor and began making organizational changes to create a team newsroom there.[20] The second content analysis covered June 1, 1994, to May 31, 1995. He found evidence that a switch to a topic team increased coverage and play, but the study was not geared to assess quality. It did not address structural concerns or the team's formation.

The Hansen/Neuzil/Ward team spent a month with each of the two Twin Cities papers and surveyed newsroom staffers on their reactions to teams. Those papers, too, were quite new to the team system (they began teams within six months of each other in 1995) and there was widespread distress among staffers over many other management decisions. A survey done there indicated that there was much dissatisfaction with the team structure and that teams might be inappropriate for newsroom use.[21]

In the workplace

Much has been written about business teams. Teams have been of interest since the years following World War II, popularized in great part by the work W. Edwards Deming did with the Japanese in helping the country rebuild after the war. Both management and psychological perspectives have been well covered. The *Pilot* was greatly influenced by the work of Deming as

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[17] John T. Russial is assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

[18] Kathleen A. Hansen is associate professor at the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Mark Neuzil is assistant professor and Jean Ward is professor at the same school.

[19] *The Oregonian* began the Health & Science team and several others in spring 1994.

[20] John T. Russial, "Topic-Team Performance: A Content Study," *Newspaper Research Journal* 18, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1997), 126.

well as Ralph Strayor, an American businessman and consultant in managing change, and Jon R. Katzenbach and Derek Smith, leading proponents and experts on workplace teams. Katzenbach and Smith, in particular, are very helpful in understanding the formation process of teams and their internal dynamics.

Their research indicates that teams outperform individuals acting alone or in larger organizational groupings, especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgments and experiences.[22] Because American culture is strongly individualistic, as is the traditionally competitive journalistic culture, there is often resistance to teams. To overcome that resistance, they say, takes "rigorous application of team basics" and a strong focus on performance. What they describe as "team basics" are meaningful purpose, specific performance goals, common approach, complementary skills, and mutual accountability.[23] Size matters: the best teams are small, ideally no more than 10 or 12 members.[24] The best way to understand teams, they say, is to look at teams. Real teams are deeply committed to their purpose, goals and approach. A team is always a result of pursuing a demanding performance challenge that is meaningful to its members and doing so in a participatory way.

Industry discussion

Industry journals have published articles on newsroom teams, with several of the authors investigating teams at the *Pilot*. In early1995, Carl Sessions Stepp of the University of Maryland spent a day at the *Pilot* and wrote it up for the *American Journalism Review*. Janet Weaver, at the time a deputy managing editor at the *Pilot*, described in the October 1993 *ASNE Bulletin* what it was like to be in the *Pilot* newsroom as the teams were being formed. Other writers have described team experiments at *The Wichita Eagle*, *The Oregonian*, *The Dayton Daily News* and

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[21] Kathleen A. Hansen, Mark Neuzil, and Jean Ward. "Newsroom Topic Teams: Journalists' Assessments of Effects on News Routines and Newspaper Quality" (paper presented to the Newspaper Division at AEJMC annual conference, Chicago, July 1997).
[22] Jon R. Katzenbach, Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).
[23] Ibid, 45.

The (Columbia, S.C.) *State*, which brought TQM and teams to its newsroom in 1992 at about the same time as the *Pilot*.

Perhaps the most significant industry work, however, in terms of having an effect on the *Pilot* at that time, is the 1991 American Society of Newspaper Editors report, *Keys to Our Survival*. It discussed in detail how newspapers could better serve at-risk readers (defined here as those who don't have much time for reading) and potential readers (defined as those who don't think there is sufficient substance in the papers to merit their attention).[25] The report also suggested a variety of "hot topics" for building readership, including stories touching on education, parenting and family.

Public journalism

The Public Life Team, founded in 1992 while public journalism advocate Cole C. Campbell[26] was managing editor and editor-to-be, was influenced soon after its inception by the work of Richard Harwood. A social researcher and consultant with the Harwood Group, he promoted focus groups as a way of connecting with the public. Jay Rosen,[27] an associate professor at New York University's School of Journalism, was a strong influence as well. Since 1993-94,[28] Rosen and former *Wichita Eagle* Editor Davis "Buzz" Merritt have been closely associated with the reform movement known as public journalism. Rosen, who believes that democracy and journalism are inextricably entwined and that both are in need of a major overhaul led, in part, by a reconstituted journalism ethic, consulted with the *Pilot* public life team. The team's current leader, Bill Bartel, worked with Merritt at the *Eagle*.

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[24] Ibid, 275.

[25] Cole C. Campbell, "Managing Change in *The Virginian-Pilot* Newsroom: A Case Study," unpublished, *Virginian-Pilot* records.

[26] Cole Campbell was named editor of the *Pilot* in March 1993 when Sandra Mims Rowe announced she would be leaving for *The Oregonian*. Campbell is now executive editor of *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, where he has instituted a team structure.

[27] Jay Rosen is director of the Project on Public Life and the Press and an associate of the Kettering Foundation.

[28] Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists For?* (New York: Yale University Press, 1999), 72. Public journalism began to develop in the early 1990s but didn't really acquire a name and a determined following until 1993.

The public journalism focus on connecting with the public has closely associated it with the work of topic teams in any case. Topic teams are generally defined from the public's point of view, seeing areas of interest as something determined by the general reader as opposed to finding something important because of its governmental role. Public journalists aim to drop the goal of "objectivity," claiming it gets in the way. "But suppose that getting the separations right isn't the central problem," Rosen writes. "This is what public journalism is saying: getting the connections right is the deeper challenge in journalism right now."[29] Arthur Charity wrote in a 1996 National Civic Review article that "the *Virginian-Pilot* didn't come to public journalism looking for a new angle on a big story such as an election, the redevelopment of a city, or tension over race. It came because its beat structure was in trouble."[30]

Research questions

An overview of the formation and growth of two topic teams deemed successful by their own paper should be helpful in assessing or deciding whether to establish topic teams in other newsrooms. This study will address the following questions:

1. Is it clear that these topic teams are teams and not work groups?
2. In what ways were the teams considered successful and beneficial?
3. In what ways were the teams considered unsuccessful or detrimental?
4. Did they adapt in response to specific performance needs and goals?

Method

The Virginian-Pilot was selected because it was the largest of the first papers to experiment with team structure.[31] Two full days of interviews were held at the *Pilot*[32] and telephone and e-mail interviews were conducted over the course of several weeks.[33] The *Pilot* graciously allowed access to records from 1990 through 1999, which included memos, notes, training guides and in-house publications. Memos from then-Executive Editor Sandra Mims Rowe were particularly important, as was a case history written by Cole Campbell. This study first explores how and why the *Pilot* decided to experiment with teams, then focuses directly on the Education and Public Life teams.

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[29] Jay Rosen, *Getting the Connections Right: Public Journalism and the Troubles in the Press* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996).
[30] Arthur Charity, "What is Public Journalism? Five Communities, Five Examples," *National Civic Review* 85 no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1996): 14.
[31] According to *Inside Newsroom Teams*, six newspapers began what became multiple-team structures in 1991: *The Tribune Star* in Terre Haute, Ind., *The News & Record* in Greensboro, N.C., *The York Daily Record* in Pennsylvania, *The State* in Columbia, S.C., *The Roanoke Times* and *The Virginian-Pilot*, both in Virginia. *The News & Record, Roanoke Times* and *Virginian-Pilot* are owned by Landmark

The birth of teams at the *Pilot*

Two daylong retreats in the summer of 1991 came to be known as the Sandbridge meetings. A dozen top editors met at Executive Editor Sandra Mims Rowe's oceanfront vacation home in the Sandbridge area of Virginia Beach to assess ASNE's "*Keys*" report as well as to discuss the *Pilot*'s news report and recommendations made for improving it. The meetings produced new recommendations, including consolidating some outlying bureaus into a larger bureau; bringing the paper's five education reporters together in a central site with an editor dedicated to education to test a topical approach to education; designating a special team of talented writers to contribute to the whole papers to test the newsroom without walls concept; and launching new beats "to touch upon some of the ASNE hot topics."[34]

Meanwhile, back in Landmark Communications corporate-level offices, Chairman of the Board Frank Batten feared the advertising base wouldn't bounce back at the end of the recession that opened the 1990s. He and John O. "Dubby" Wynne, Landmark's president, asked Executive Vice President Don Patterson to find a way to improve productivity and cut costs. Patterson

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Communications. The newsroom staff of the *Pilot*, at 280, is roughly double the size of the next largest paper's, the *State's*, at 145.

[32] Interviews were held on 14 and 15 October 1999. Other correspondence took place from October through December 1999.

[33] Among those consulted at *The Virginian-Pilot* were Editor Kay Tucker Addis, Managing Editor Dennis Hartig, Deputy Managing Editor I. Nelson Brown, Director of Systems and Technology Randy Jessee, Public Life Team Leader Bill Bartel, Military Team Leader Tony Germanotta, Education Team Leader Michele Vernon-Chesley, General Manager/North Carolina Tom Warhover, Erica Smith, copy editor, and Earl Swift, staff writer. Rosemary Armao, managing editor of *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, was also consulted.

[34] Cole Campbell, unpublished chapter.

recommended that Landmark adopt Continuous Improvement, or Total Quality Management. The philosophy, expressed by W. Edwards Deming, stresses knowing what "customers" want, finding ways to evaluate the processes used to meet those wants and continuously improving the processes to increase quality. Deming argues that those closest to the work know it best and can do the most to improve it through teamwork. Wynne mandated this throughout the company. The newsroom was no exception.[35]

The Conway Quality Inc. consulting group was brought in to teach the newsroom about flow charts and productivity measures. The consultants stayed for 24 months, eventually training 4,000 Landmark employees. The bill for introducing CI, as it came to be known, was about $2 million. There were other costs as well: Conway didn't meet with complete acclaim in the newsroom. In 1992, Patterson described the *Pilot* as being in a "learning swamp" with CI, but he remained optimistic. Nevertheless, the program reinforced the newsroom's experiments with teams and helped accelerate the newsroom's restructuring, which at that time included eliminating a number of senior editing positions to flatten the hierarchy, or reduce the number of management layers.[36]

The editors decided that a team approach would offer more consistent coverage, increased productivity and higher quality. "Like every other newsroom, we were being pressured to do more with less. Heavy pressure," Deputy Managing Editor I. Nelson Brown said.

> We wanted to find a way to build expertise and improve productivity without just going back to the newsroom and saying "work harder." ... Maybe five could do the work of six if they shared. If we cut out the redundancy, maybe we could find ways to build quality. We thought teams would work together to build expertise and communication, and by and large, we've found that to be true. ... Nobody said you have to reorganize the newsroom. That was up to us.[37]

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[35] Ibid.

[36] As *Pilot* Managing Editor Dennis A. Hartig explains it, "In a team system, the goal is to drive as many day-to-day decisions down (the management layers). So that is where a lot of time has to be spent – developing the capacity of the organization to do this." Personal memo, 11 October 1999.

[37] I. Nelson Brown, interview with author, *The Virginian-Pilot*, 15 October 1999.

They hoped to increase expertise by having reporters covering the same topic work together in the same office and for the same editor, who was dedicated to that topic. "Could we do our work better? That was the question that drove us," Managing Editor Dennis Hartig recalled. "We saw that under the system we had, we were doing the same story over and over. In April, at (city) budget time, we thought 'What a waste.'"[38]

The Education Team begins

Education was a hot topic in the ASNE "*Keys*" report, and addressing subjects related to education gave the paper ways to draw in high school students as correspondents and thus readers (teens were named as part of the at-risk group). Since the *Pilot*'s education reporters had a history of cooperating across bureau lines, it made sense to the top editors to start an Education Team. Rosemary Armao, Portsmouth city editor, was chosen as the first team leader. The team was assigned a home in the paper's Virginia Beach offices. Education reporters would no longer report to a city editor in each one of the cities. Instead, all of them would answer to one team leader – and to themselves.[39]

On the day they were to begin, Armao recalls, "no one showed up. So I called all the education reporters and told them to report immediately to Virginia Beach; we were now a team."[40] Was there enthusiasm about being the first? "No," she said. "Most of us thought it was going to be a disaster; we regarded it as a new experiment by an untried new editor. So we held a bunch of meetings at which we said, OK, we have to do this so what shall we do with it. We embraced the ideas."

The team was a near-immediate success in terms of the number of stories it produced. The team, in fact, had to be asked to reduce its output.[41] One of its first challenges was to find a new way to report "process" stories. The team, responsible for covering five school districts, had to devise a way to avoid duplication of effort. When an idea or trend arose in one school, it was floated in front of the other team members to see if there could be a regional approach to the story. After checking the regional implications, the team would tell readers what they could expect at their child's school.[42]

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[38] Dennis Hartig, interview with author, *The Virginian-Pilot*, 14 October 1999.
[39] The organization charts in the *Appendix* illustrates this change.
[40] Rosemary Armao, interview with author, e-mail, 6 December 1999.
[41] Dennis Hartig, interview with author, 14 October 1999.

Public meetings were used as tip sheets, "rather than as our daily bread," then-Deputy Managing Editor Janet Weaver[43] wrote. As a result, reporters have to be even more plugged into their sources and they "must have a 'wondrous' variety of sources."

The team developed a web of more than 100 teen-age correspondents at high schools across the region. They provided tips and also wrote for *Teenology*,[44] a weekly teen page that ran in the features section. The team also developed a fax-back feature. If a reader wanted more information about performance of specific schools, the information could be faxed back to the reader.

For a brief time, the team experimented with having a copy editor as one of its fulltime members in Virginia Beach. The experiment, inspired by the maestro concept developed by L. Buck Ryan,[45] lasted six weeks. In some ways it was a success. The interaction between the copy editor and the other team members was encouraging, but the supporting technology at that time was a major problem.[46] Because of timing differences in when the work had to be done, there were times when the copy editor's time was underutilized. Stories had to be written before they could be edited, but part of the experiment was to have the copy editor on-site during the original team members' normal day hours. Other functions, such as headline writing and other presentation aspects, had to be delegated to the regular night copy desk when the team copy editor left for the night.[47]

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[42] Janet Weaver, "We're Equipping Our Papers to Capture Both At-Risk and Potential Readers Because in Virginia Beach, We Have More Than Our Share of Both," *ASNE Bulletin* (October 1993).

[43] Janet Weaver is now the executive editor of *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*.

[44] The section is now known as *757*.

[45] L. Buck Ryan began telling newspapers in the early 1990s that they needed an integrated way to produce newspaper pages in light of new technology. His approach became known as the maestro concept because it focused on people working together.

[46] In particular, computer networking between Norfolk and Virginia Beach hindered the process. Randy Jessee, interviews with author, October 1999; I. Nelson Brown, interview with author, 15 October 1999. Also consulted were notes from Mike Merschel, "The Education Team Editing Experiment," 29 August 1992. Merschel is the copy editor who took part in the experiment.

An early assessment

A survey was taken among team members, newsroom colleagues and some members of the community to assess how the team was doing. It got high marks, "rarely below 7 in any category" when the top mark was 10, commented then-Deputy Managing Editor Ed Power.[48] The conclusion was that the team concept worked, creating idea synergy, enthusiasm and professional pride. "The team was more productive than the old system," Hartig said. "Quality went up. It started new stuff. There was a favorable impact on the paper."[49]

Some of the shortcomings noted by Power: The tabloid papers were shortchanged because more was going in the mainsheet. The geographically centralized location of the team meant more travel time for its members, increasing pressure on reporters. Not every reporter was necessarily right for a team assignment; you have to want to be on a team. Any team needs a strong editor who is passionately interested in the subject matter and willing to be an advocate for the team's work. The paper needed to find a way to give the team more access to wire stories for localization. The paper needed to make sure top editors were available to team members.

Teaming up: A deeper look

"Molding a team will be one of the biggest jobs of the new education editor, wrote Armao before taking on that job. "Involved are individuals who are all talented, proud and keen competitors."[50] In December 1999, Armao recalled:

> My first sense that we were working as a team came on a winter day when the downtown editors after their morning meeting said they thought there was a lot of flu affecting the schools. We checked it out and found that there was flu, but

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[47] Morning papers such as the *Pilot* are put together at night when space and news requirements become clear. It is then that nearly all the display work is done and stories reach their final form.

[48] Edward Power, "Education Team Survey," 18 June 1993. Power left the *Pilot* in 1997, but returned to Landmark Communications in December 1999 as the publisher of *Inside Business*.

[49] Dennis Hartig, interview, 14 October 1999.

[50] Rosemary Armao, memo to Dennis Hartig, "The Education Team," 13 August 1991, *Virginian-Pilot* records.

> schools weren't being shut down; nothing extraordinary for that time of year was occurring. The editors then instructed us to call around to work places and do a story about winter illness. And we said no. It was a simple as that. We said, that's a stupid nothing story. We are the experts, remember? We'll spend the time doing a REAL school story. I don't remember what we gave them instead, but it was NOT a flu story. We really grasped the power of what we had.[51]

And there were other times when the sense of being a team was evident, such as:

> … At the meetings when people would throw out an idea and others would build on it. Once when our Norfolk reporter was out of town working on a feature story (I thought that reporters should have a chance to do stories outside schools so they'd not get bored and leave the team) the superintendent resigned. Without whining or complaint, the other members of the team began making calls and did a hell of a piece. And when we began doing group evaluations – hard, insightful evaluations and there were no hurt feelings and grievances – I knew it was special.[52]

Armao credits the team with developing a coordinated coverage not possible under the traditional beat structure. The team would produce, for example, "one regional budget story with sidebars instead of a bunch of little stories that all said the same thing for the various cities." The team also went after big stories other papers didn't tackle, "such as one on how parental involvement really works. … We did exceptional coverage even through there was no one star of the team."[53]

Missions and goals

Team-management practices rely heavily on mission statements. This is what the Education Team members wrote:

> The Education Team will make the VPLS[54] the authority for our Hampton Roads readers on people, issues and events in education:
>
> - Explaining in everyday language the consequences to them of what is happening in classrooms, administrative boardrooms, and state and national law-making chambers.

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[51] Rosemary Armao, interview with author, e-mail, 6 December 1999.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] *The Virginian-Pilot* and *The Ledger Star*, sister papers, merged in 1982. *The Ledger Star*'s name was dropped in 1995 when the afternoon paper officially closed. The demise, which was announced in 1991, and closing apparently had no effect on the teams' operations.

- Showing them, by getting into the region's classrooms ourselves, what and how their children are learning.
- Exploring , then debunking or highlighting, school reforms and educational ideas being tested locally, around the state or elsewhere nationally.
- Giving readers resources they need, from information to bibliographies, to improve their children's education.
- Recruiting high school and college writers to contribute news stories, features and to tune us into the social and academic happenings in schools and campuses.
- Soliciting and acting on insights, concerns and criticism from our readers.
- Exposing the inequities caused by racial, gender, geographic and income disparities in Virginia's schools.

A major part of building teams is developing performance goals. The Education Team, formed before the strict guidelines of CI were brought to the newsroom, set its initial goals in a very practical way. Armao recalled:

> We had a lot of smart reporters and we sat down and wrote a list of the stories we wanted in the paper. It was as simple as that. Then we prioritized them and set goals for how many we wanted in by when. We met one hour every week – formally, not just talking in the newsroom, which we did every day. And once every three months we met out of the building – my favorite was in bathing suits at Virginia Beach – to go over what we liked that we'd done and where we'd failed.[55]

Then-editor Campbell assessed the team's first two years this way:

> The paper has moved from routine coverage of routine meetings to substantive coverage of the day-to-day issues facing school boards, administrators, parents and students. The team has produced detailed stories about the state's school-by-school report cards, the trend to middle schools, loan default rates at business and vocational colleges and the special challenges confronting students who live in public housing. … Lorraine Eaton, the team's editor in charge of high school news, works with 107 correspondents from 41 schools. The correspondents write stories about what's happening in the lives of high school students, including most of the *Teenology* section that runs Friday in *The Daily Break*.[56]

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[55] Rosemary Armao, interview, e-mail, 6 December 1999.

[56] Cole Campbell, "Promises to Keep: Community, Democracy and a Better Newspaper," column, *The Virginian-Pilot*, 9 November 1993.

The team today

Michele Vernon-Chesley joined the team in February 1997 as the youth editor, becoming team leader that September.[57] The team is similarly structured today, with six reporters and one editor. Four of the reporters cover specific school systems (one reporter doubles up), one reporter covers higher education, education issues and trends, and one reporter covers teen issues. They still meet once a week, for an hour and a half, to plan stories and discuss "what the newspaper is doing in general."[58] They take one-day annual retreats, not quarterly as in the beginning, to assess their work and goals and keep themselves on course. They still find major drawbacks, as well as advantages, in being all together in one location rather than situated in the geographic areas they cover.

The practice of asking the community for help in deciding what to cover, a practice begun in the second or third year of the team's history, continues in a team-decided way. "We try to bring community folks in to talk to us on a quarterly basis," Vernon-Chesley said. "Sometimes it's a few kids, or a few educators, teachers; once we brought someone in by himself. We include parents. We might say, 'If we wrote about middle schools, what would you want to see? What would you want to tell people?' We're not there; we don't know everything. It's foolish to think we do. We started this as a plan in '97."

Performance goals and measures, so much a part of CI, have become more formulated in keeping with the paper-wide commitment to Deming's principles. The team sets many of them and works to keep them of value to the team. "We check to make sure they're effective," Vernon-Chesley said.

> Are they helping the coverage get better? Or are they just there because the higher-ups want it. There's no point to that if it's not helping the coverage. In January this year, we talked about measures. One of ours is "youthful voices."

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[57] Patricia Barnes was team leader following Rosemary Armao, and Debra Adams followed Barnes. Barnes is no longer with the *Pilot*; Adams left the *Pilot* in 1997 but returned as a deputy managing editor in December 1999.

[58] Michele Vernon-Chesley, interview with author, telephone, 2 December 1999. Subsequent quoted material is from the same interview or an e-mail follow-up, 3 December 1999.

> How often are they heard in the paper? Well, we were hitting our goals so much that it was silly to keep it as a measure. So we dropped it. … But sometimes we spot check our measures and don't report to anyone. Are we straying from our path? Well, we found out that we dropped the measure and we haven't been as aggressive getting youthful voices in the paper. The measures work.

This year, they decided they wanted to do more stories with computer-assisted reporting. "If the story's about remediation and retention, let's see what's going on across the state, the country. It lends context and depth to the report. We set a goal of having it in 50 percent of the stories everyone does. We haven't hit it in the last two months, but it's a goal." They want more profiles – two per month. And they want more hard-edge stories, stories they refer to in writing as the #@$!** stories, the kind that provoke a strong reaction when the reader sees them. "We want them to be outraged, alarmed, concerned, enraged, moved to action," she said. Two a month is the goal.[59]

The team system works for them, she said. "We're all on the same page when we sit down to talk. We start with education as a regional issue and we talk about that rather than just report individual school systems. Someone may pitch a story out of Norfolk – that there's an incredible shortage of substitute teachers, for example. Well, that interests us. Is this a trend? The more we talked about it, the more we saw it was something we wanted to stay on." And on this team, everyone still pitches in. For one person's story, it's usual for the team members to call their own sources to give the "stories a little more sweep." They might only contribute a paragraph or a line, but sometimes it's more. "We don't even use a 'contributed by' tagline since it's so usual," she said.

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[59] In addition to the goals named above, the team aims to do three stories that show effective learning per month. In addition, there are newsroom-wide goals of 100 percent accuracy and 40 hours of training per person per year (e-mail, 3 December 1999).

The Public Life Team begins

In fall 1992, with the success of the Education Team, the editors decided to go all the way. "The chief thing we learned," Rowe wrote after the team had been in place for a year, "was that the success of bringing together reporters with a shared interest in a subject (in this instance, education) could and should be duplicated by grouping other similar beats. That is where we are now."[60] The editors chose public life as their next team topic.[61]

The Public Life Team was charged with taking what had been learned from the operation of the Education Team and applying it to a really process-oriented beat like city government. They were called upon to find a new way of writing about politics that interests people. "The thing we most closely mirrored education on was the attempt to do both geography and topic expertise at the same time," Tom Warhover, the team's first leader, recalled. "So that while a reporter might have a specific city, she would also be charged with an area. Lake Gaston[62] is a good example. Transportation was another. … The big difference, though, was that education formed BEFORE we really got into TQM and 'continuous improvement.' By the time public life came along, the company was groovin' on Dr. Deming and mission statements and reducing waste, etc. … Our team spent six months developing the mission statement alone."[63]

The mission statement was quite a statement. The first one didn't fly. They wrote a second one, full of revolutionary zeal and passion. They opted for utility and helping people in language that more resembled manifesto than business-speak:

> We will help cure a democracy that has grown sick with disenchantment. We will lead the community to discover itself and act on what it has learned. We will show how the community works or could work, whether that means exposing corruption, telling citizens how to make their voices heard, holding up a fresh perspective or spotlighting people who do their jobs well. We will

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[60] Sandra Mims Rowe, "To all newsroom staffers," 14 October 1992, *Virginian-Pilot* records.

[61] The *Pilot* had a newsroom full of teams by summer 1993: education, public life (government), criminal justice, spot news (the 911 Jump Team), specialty (health, science, environment, religion, consumers and demographic/socio-economic trends), entertainment, real life, global (military, national, international), business, and women, children and family.

[62] Lake Gaston is situated on the North Carolina-Virginia border and was the subject of dispute as to whether it should be tapped for drinking water for the Hampton Roads area.

[63] Tom Warhover, e-mail, Dec. 2, 1999.

> portray a democracy in the fullest sense of the word, whether in a council chamber or cul-de-sac. We do this knowing that a lively, informed and, most of all, engaged public is essential to a healthy community and to the health of these newspapers.

Interestingly, this was written about six months before the team heard about the work of Jay Rosen. "We had already said our first duty as journalists was to nurture democracy. We had no clue as to how to go about doing that," Warhover said. "The more important character in the first year was Richard Harwood of the Harwood Group. His research booklet, 'Meaningful Chaos,' became our bible. It contained seven elements describing how private people form ideas about public issues, which is where we needed to start our exploration."[64] Warhover described his job as helping reporters "understand the need to reconnect their reporting to citizens' concerns and discover methods to accomplish this."[65]

Logistics

The initial team had four reporters, each assigned to cover a city with an intern covering the fifth city, and one reporter dedicated to covering what would become known as public journalism matters. "We thought it might be smart to have someone who might spot things others might not," Tony Germanotta, the team's second editor, said.[66] The reporters had been stationed in the paper's five outposts; with the formation of a team, they were all brought to Chesapeake. They soon found that pooling information was extremely helpful, and that there were things you could do as a team that you could not do under the traditional structure. Planning was one thing. Brainstorming was another.

But there were disadvantages, too. Teams could be insular, leading to an Us vs. Them attitude in the newsroom, Germanotta said. And by being in Chesapeake and removed from the main newsroom in Norfolk, reporters for the other cities often missed what was going on in the areas to which they were assigned. The team developed a "mini-beat reporter" system, drawing upon the bureau reporters, and all team members were advised to keep in close contact with the editors for the individual cities.

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Tom Warhover, unpublished manuscript, shared with author, e-mail attachment.

In the beginning, they met often, "whether they needed to or not," and that proved stressful. "The clear lines of command weren't necessarily there, but you got things done," Germanotta said. Eventually, the team dropped many of those meetings, opting for mini-huddles and a meeting that lasted for one hour each week. They found that that was especially helpful when they decided to disperse and work out of the branch offices. The pressure of geography had been simply too much. In 1999, the team leader was stationed in Norfolk in the main newsroom along with three other team members.

The team developed a list of criteria – in keeping with CI – by which to judge the stories they were writing. For a year and a half, they compared their work to this list, asking in their meetings, could we have added a paragraph here? Been clearer there? Asked different sources? Tied this into another story? And so on. And they tracked how many errors and corrections they made, how many stories were filed on time. "You can't manage by a formula anymore than you can write a story that way," Germanotta said. "And what makes sense here, may not elsewhere."

"Teams are funny things," Warhover said. "There's a reason why so few sports teams are really really good, and why they spend all that time talking about chemistry and team dynamics and all that other stuff. It seemed like every time I'd say, 'yeah, we're really clicking here,' I got scared that it wouldn't last. All the management fodder about the need to continuously work at teamwork is true. Most of the time we functioned together very well as a work group; some of the time we really clicked as a team."[67]

Public presence

The team spent months working with social researcher Harwood, looking for ways to treat readers as citizens with something to say. The subject was the source of debate for the team

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[66] Tony Germanotta, interview with author, *The Virginian-Pilot*, 14 October 1999.
[67] Tom Warhover, interview with author, e-mail, 7 December 1999.

members, but they kept at it. The team experimented with community conversations, bringing some ten to fifteen people together for up to two hours to discuss possibilities, make connections.

The team also saw a need to alter how the paper covered elections. "We assumed elections were primarily about winning and losing. And so we wrote the stories that way," Warhover wrote. "The *Pilot* had tried several ways to be more inclusive, adding a 'citizens' agenda' through community conversations and issue polls. We would come to understand, though, through trial and error, that over-reliance on a citizens' agenda cuts out the legitimate role of candidates to propose new ideas and solutions. And we struggled with how to write those stories without the game metaphor."[68]

This is when Campbell came up with an idea: Why not cover the election as if it were a job search? The candidate applies, the citizens hire. The 1996 Senate campaign kicked off the team's new coverage. The candidates were asked to describe what they wanted to do in the job, should they get it. The 1997 gubernatorial campaign carried it further, adding resumes. "Exhaustive work went into figuring out what's most important to people," Warhover wrote. "We ran community conversations across the state. We developed issue polls to get beyond simple either/or choices and into prioritizing among a number of continuing problems. We spent our summers finding the public so that we could spend our fall seasons challenging the candidates to address public concerns."[69]

Public journalism

Rosen credits the *Pilot* with being the one newspaper that, "more than any other, took the idea of public journalism and moved it several stages ahead."[70] Warhover describes Rosen's impact as small in the first year of the team's life, but as "vast and great" later on. The most direct impact was when the whole team went to a seminar on public life and the press and later when Rosen came to the Pilot for discussions. And while not all of the team members found what

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[68] Tom Warhover, unpublished manuscript, shared with author, e-mail attachment.
[69] Ibid.

Rosen said to their liking, all were "engaged," Warhover said. "They didn't let Jay – or themselves – off the hook. They questioned everything, including their own assumptions. It was a heady period of introspection."

It was also a time for team members to face some dissension and ridicule in the newsroom, Warhover said, citing "whisper campaigns" and harsh criticisms from those who disagreed with the controversial ideas. "As you know, newsrooms can be about as friendly as the school yard of a bunch of sixth-graders at recess."[71]

The team today

Bill Bartel, who arrived at the *Pilot* from *The Wichita Eagle* in mid-1999, is the current public life team leader. Ideologically, he and the team have similar backgrounds. Davis "Buzz" Merritt, former editor of the *Eagle* and someone with whom Bartel worked, is considered Rosen's partner in establishing the public journalism movement.

The team has six reporters with one of them specializing in a citizenship beat, but there is a position open for a regional reporter. Team members still work closely with city teams – in fact, they have their desks in the city bureaus, reporting back to Bartel. "That's an issue in building the esprit de corps of the team," he said. "You get out of the mix of the newsroom to focus on city life. It worked – it helped them work. So now there's still a relationship with the team, but there's also a relationship with the city reporters and colleagues. And this puts them near where they cover. With communication technology, you don't need to be together. It's an immensely valuable tool."[72]

"With my guys – we meet once a week on Monday and we meet for an hour. We share what we're working on, share what we know, gossip, talk about our own community, walk through what different people are doing, share recognition. It's to let people know you're thinking of each other. Meredith may have a problem that Katrice knows how to fix."

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[70] Jay Rosen, *What are journalists for?* 128.
[71] Tom Warhover, interview.

For Bartel, the team system works, but there are "certain authoritative aspects of newspapers you can't get away from. It's 90 percent that they tell me what they're doing, and 10 percent I need you to do this now." The teamwork comes easily when you become friends in a professional way, he said. "You have to get people to buy into the concept. In this place, it already exists. You have to buy into how teams work to be part of the culture here."[73]

Conclusion

Teams vs. Work Groups

A team isn't just a group of people. Katzenbach and Smith define a team as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, [illegible] approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."[74] A working group, something very different, is one "that can achieve its performance challenge entirely through the combination of individual contributions. No collective work products are necessary."[75]

That the topic teams have a common purpose is clear from their coverage areas and their mission statements, which are team-drawn, not imposed. They draw up their own performance goals in addition to accepting news management mandates, such as the one to find a new way to handle "process" stories. Together the teams determine their approach, deciding which stories should be written, areas of importance and interest, and the ways in which the information should be collected and written. They prioritize all of this. Both teams meet in special review sessions to assess how they've done in meeting their goals and missions. Both rely on measurements for team-set criteria for many things including deadlines met and "voices" represented in the copy. The Education Team spot-checked itself. The Public Life Team drew up a set of questions for itself and answered them each week for a year and a half.

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[72] The team was the first at the *Pilot* to be fully supplied with laptops, which happened in 1999.
[73] Bill Bartel, interview with author, *The Virginian-Pilot*, 14 October 1999.
[74] Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*, 275.
[75] Ibid., 281.

There are intangible aspects to teamhood, however, that go beyond what could be management-imposed behaviors. Evidence of team cohesion should be a clue that more is at work, and the types of decisions the teams made would be indicative as well. In both cases, the *Pilot*'s topic teams fare well. In the early days of the Education Team, its decision to *not* cover a flu story was a clear sign the team was seeing itself as an entity able to act on its own resources. Team members cover for each other without being asked, expecting no special mention. The Public Life Team faced "dissension and ridicule" in the newsroom over its interest in public journalism, but it faced it together and without breaking up. That the team would write a mission statement that begins "We will help cure a democracy…" is surely a sign of a united front.

Both teams give evidence of questioning measures and bending them to fit their own needs. These are the acts of teams, not individuals merely working together. Teams innovate. It was a team that developed the network of 107 teen-agers to enhance education coverage. It was a team that put a novel way of covering elections into practice.

Successful or beneficial

Going into the team experiment, the *Pilot* wanted increased productivity, more consistent coverage and higher quality. "We thought teams would work together to build expertise and communication and, by and large, we've found that to be true," Brown stated. Hartig was looking for a way around redundancy. What they found right away was an increase in the number of stories that were produced after the team members switched from their traditional beat methods. The Education Team had to be asked to cut back.

Both teams have commented on the coordination of coverage that is not possible under a traditional beat structure. Team leaders of both teams said that coordination and community input made their coverage more thorough. The team members' willingness to step in for another speaks to their focus on consistency; whether it was achieved was not addressed within this study. The redundancy issue was solved by finding ways around writing the "process" stories and therefore avoiding the duplication of reporting each step of a process from many different "beats." Instead, there was a regionalized story that showed how the process was working throughout the region.

Elements cited in interviews and newspaper documents as successes include idea synergy, enthusiasm, professional pride, higher productivity, higher quality, new methods, and a "favorable impact on the paper." Armao spoke of the big stories the team was able to handle as a team. Campbell spoke of substantive rather than routine reporting once the teams discovered a way to report the news from a "topic" perspective rather than one based on "place," as with traditional beats. Pooling, planning and brainstorming were all enhanced by the new system, according to the *Pilot*. "We're all on the same page," Vernon-Chesley said.

Unsuccessful or detrimental

One of the reasons the *Pilot* decided to look at team structures was to solve the problem of "geography," or of too many people working in what were almost autonomous bureaus, separate from each other. When it consolidated reporters and editors into topic teams, the problem of geography reversed itself. The reporters found themselves cut off from the areas they covered and felt they were missing stories as a result. The additional travel time was stressful.

The time involved in building and keeping a team is considerable and constant since communication is essential and measurements and assessments are part of the bureaucratic structure. Meeting often, "whether they needed to or not," was stressful. With the flattened hierarchies, the clear lines of command were not always there, nor was there as much access to top editors as some members wanted. It became obvious that good teams have good team leaders who are strong editors with a passionate interest in the subject matter, and that those leaders should be strong advocates for their teams. Such people may not always be available.

Buying "into the concept" is a big part of team membership, and not everyone is cut out for teams. Those who are not – and newsrooms are known for their individualistic members – do not readily fit into the culture. As the Public Life Team noted, the existence of teams can lead to an "Us vs. Them" situation in the newsroom, and teams themselves can become insular.

Two other problems were noted. The zoned tabloid sections were shortchanged of news because of the new way of regionalizing stories and treating them by topic rather than development. Team members needed to have more access to wire stories: Under a traditional system where assignments pass down the ladder, most assignment editors routinely check the wires for national or international stories that need localization. When stories originate at the reporting level, as with teams, they can lack this overview.

Adaptability

Perhaps the most difficult adaptation the teams had to make was to the irksome "geography" question. The Public Life Team soon developed a "mini-beat" reporter system through befriending colleagues in the bureaus to catch stories they might otherwise miss. Team members started spending a lot of time away from their Chesapeake-based home. Eventually, the team dispersed, with the leader and three reporters in the Norfolk office and three others in the branch offices. Having laptops made this possible, or at least much easier.

Charged with connecting with readers, both teams came to design community forums to gain reader input. With the Education Team, that might mean inviting one or two people in for a chat or it might mean a public session. With the Public Life Team, during the 1997 gubernatorial election, that meant statewide conversations.

The teams adapted company policies to their own needs. Under the management principles adopted by Landmark, regular meetings and pulse-taking sessions must be held. Each team changed over the years with both of them reducing the formal meetings to stress informal "mini-huddles" and timed weekly sessions. If measurements didn't make sense, they abandoned them. There are hints that too much dependence on management techniques is counterproductive. "It's okay if you're making widgets," Brown said. "We're not."

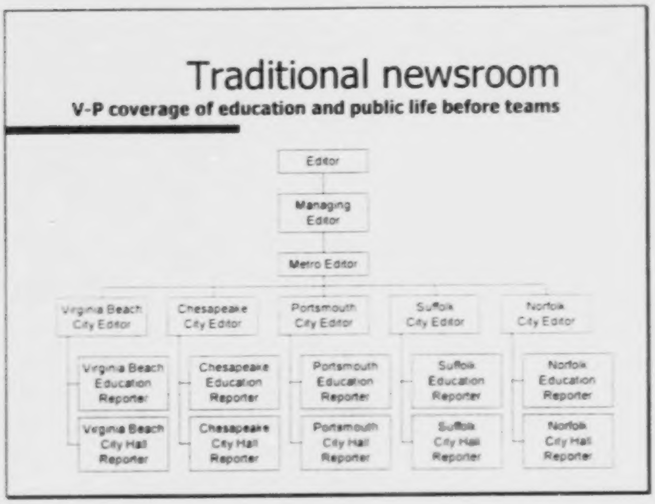
Summary

Inaugurating teams in a newsroom is anything but a cookie-cutter process if these teams are any indication. It's not a case of saying, okay, you're a team now. The teams distinguished themselves by developing personalities, by becoming entities with clout and a point of view. That is, perhaps, their strength and their vulnerability or danger. On the one hand, they can carry through projects with zeal and synergy. On the other, they are potential management threats. For example: What if the *Pilot* had objected to public journalism as a model for the Public Life Team?

In terms of management, teams take the monitoring process into their purview, relieving higher-ups of much of the overseer role. Teams regulate themselves to achieve performance standards and, when working well, challenge themselves to do better, as seen. It's possible that the reward of meeting self-imposed goals sets up a dynamic that reinforces and encourages team support. Since the goals are largely team-set, this could remove teams even farther from management control. Management styles that encompass risk and creativity could be comfortable with this potential powerhouse. Managers who are unaware of how their teams are developing, however, could be in for surprises. This study suggests that a fairly hands-off management style works well when the management is also well aware of how the teams are progressing. It also suggests that the traditional "shaping" role of the top editor could be diminished.

Further research is suggested in many areas: content analyses of news produced by team and non-team papers; the effect of morale on team performance; examinations of inter- and intra-team relationships; the development of reporting styles within teams; a comparison of team and non-team reporting styles; and the teams' relationships with the newsroom and with the people and institutions they cover, including circulation effects if any.

APPENDIX: Organization charts
Before and after *The Virginian-Pilot* began teams



Traditional newsroom

V-P coverage of education and public life before teams

Editor

Managing Editor

Metro Editor

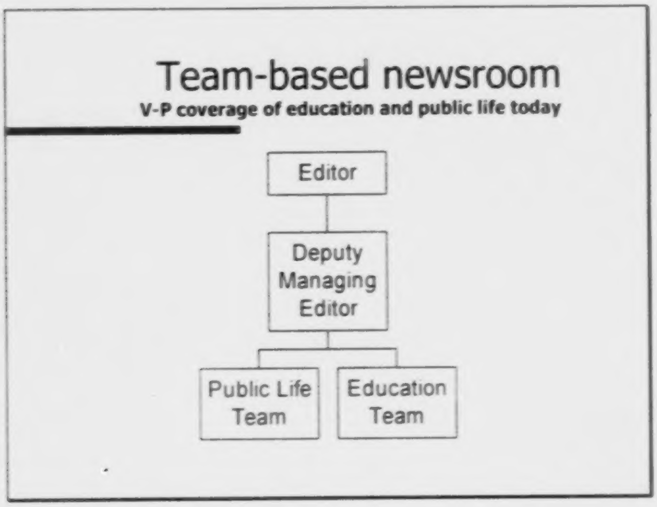
Virginia Beach City Editor
- Virginia Beach Education Reporter
- Virginia Beach City Hall Reporter

Chesapeake City Editor
- Chesapeake Education Reporter
- Chesapeake City Hall Reporter

Portsmouth City Editor
- Portsmouth Education Reporter
- Portsmouth City Hall Reporter

Suffolk City Editor
- Suffolk Education Reporter
- Suffolk City Hall Reporter

Norfolk City Editor
- Norfolk Education Reporter
- Norfolk City Hall Reporter



Team-based newsroom

V-P coverage of education and public life today

Editor

Deputy Managing Editor

Public Life Team

Education Team

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A functional analysis of New Hampshire presidential primary debates and accompanying newspaper coverage

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Abstract

Texts from one Republican and one Democratic 2000 presidential primary debate were analyzed using functional theory. Acclaims, attacks, defenses, policy and character issues, and defense strategies were coded. Candidates offered acclaims over attacks during the debates. Policy issues were dominant. Fifty-one newspaper articles about the debates were coded using the same categories. Coverage focused on attacks more than acclaims; policy more than character. Newspapers focused on conflict in debates and gave unproportional coverage to pithy statements.

Introduction

Debates have become standard fare during presidential elections in the United States. In 1956, Democratic presidential contenders Adlai E. Stevenson and Estes Kefauver met in the first televised presidential primary debate (Davis, 1997, p. 147). Four years later in the general election, John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon met for the first televised debates between two major party presidential candidates (Meyer & Carlin, 1992, p. 69). Six in ten U.S. adults watched the first Kennedy-Nixon debate. The audience for general election debates continued strong in 1976 with 70 percent of U.S. adults watching that year's general election debates. Since then viewership has dropped off (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988, p. 120).

Debates in the primary campaign are much less popular than those during a general election. The electorate often does not get interested in until the candidate field is narrowed. Jamieson & Birdsell (1988) noted that in November of 1987 only 15% of those surveyed said they were paying very close attention to news reports about Democratic presidential candidates and 13% said they were paying close attention to the Republican race (p. 122).

"The result is not surprising," Jamieson and Birdsell note. "In early stages of campaigns only those who would spend their honeymoon at a presidential convention are likely to be paying close attention to politics" (p. 122).

Problem

Perhaps because of the comparative lack of interest among the electorate in the primary campaigns, relatively little research has been done on messages – and particularly debates – in presidential primaries (e.g., Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 1998; Kendall, K. E., 2000; Murphy, 1992).

This lack of research regarding primary debates is disturbing. Perhaps of even greater consequence is the lack of research regarding media coverage of primary campaigns since research shows media use contributes to campaign knowledge (e.g., Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Lemert, 1993; Zhu, Milavsky, & Biswas, 1994). With this understanding of general campaign knowledge, it is important to know how messages are being conveyed during a primary campaign and what knowledge is likely being built.

Another concern regarding the dearth of research in this field is that researchers have found newspaper reading contributes to issue knowledge, whereas television viewing contributes to image knowledge (Chaffee et al., 1994; Lowden, Andersen, Dozier, & Lauzen, 1994). While issue knowledge may be more pertinent in choosing a president than image knowledge, appallingly little research has been done on the relationship of newspaper coverage to presidential debates, either in the general or primary election (e.g. Jacques, Meilinger, Balmoris, Gerns, & Denby, 1993; Morello, 1991).

Finally, Pfau and Eveland (1992) urge scholars to examine debates within the broader political environment consisting of newspaper, television news and news magazine coverage, candidate appearances on nontraditional media outlets such as "Larry King Live," advertisements, and personal campaigning (p. 156).

These problems and issues combine to suggest the need for research assessing presidential primary debates and the attendant newspaper coverage.

Literature Review

Murphy (1992) argues that "debates are framed by a campaign's rhetoric" (p. 219). Likewise campaign rhetoric is intrinsically linked to analysis and reporting of those messages within the mass media (Pfau & Eveland, 1992).

Zhu et al. (1994) conducted an experiment through which they determined that "debates appear to make positive contributions to rational vote decision making by helping the audience learn substantial amounts about the candidates' issue stands" (p. 327). But they further argued that televised debates may have the negative effect of focusing prospective voters' attention on candidate image rather than issue knowledge.

While televised general election debates are acknowledged to contribute to voters' perceptions of candidates, it could be suggested that primary election debates, because they are of chief interest to political "junkies," may emphasize substance over style. Substance in this case would be defined as policy issues versus character issues. This leads to the first exploratory research question:

RQ1: What are the message functions within a primary debate?

Chaffee and colleagues (1994) found that newspaper reading is a significant predictor among voters of party issue knowledge (the general differences between partisan groups), candidate issue knowledge (a specific candidate's policy positions) and candidate personal knowledge (a specific candidate's biography).

Lemert (1993) found that newspaper reading was a significant predictor of campaign knowledge and that this predictor was strengthened by exposure to a presidential debate. Lowden et al. (1994) found a significant positive correlation between newspaper use and issue knowledge.

These and other studies provide evidence for the importance of post-debate media messages which lead to the second research question:

RQ2: What are the functional debate messages most often covered in newspaper reports?

McKinnon and Tedesco (1999) tested the combined effects of watching a televised presidential debate and its attendant news commentary. They found significant differences in pre- and post-test mean semantic differential scores among those who watched both the debate and commentary. Additionally, though not statistically significant – likely because of sample size, they found a substantial increase in post-test candidate evaluations among those respondents who were exposed to both the debate and journalistic commentary that followed.

Because research shows that a combination of watching a debate and paying attention to post-debate media messages has a stronger influence on a voter's opinion than watching the debate alone, it is important to know how accurately news reports reflect what actually occurred in the debate. This leads to the final research question:

RQ3: Does newspaper coverage of functional messages within the debate accurately portray what actually occurred during the debate?

Benoit et al. (1998) in their analysis of 1996 presidential primary debates found that acclaims accounted for over half (54%) of the functional messages during those debates. Attacks (38%) and defenses (9%) trailed acclaims over all. These findings lead to the first hypothesis:

H1: Debates will consist of more acclaims than attacks or defenses.

Graber (1988) notes that research on political learning from the mass media indicates that voters learn about candidate personalities and qualifications, but less about major campaign issues (p. 3). She found in the 1976 presidential election that "[c]overage...during the primaries concentrated very heavily on fleeting campaign activities and vote tallies in state contests, slighting a discussion of the policy stands taken by the candidates" (p. 79).

Gans (1977), also focusing on the 1976 election, wrote "the debates became news and their coverage followed the daily campaign format, the news media paid major attention to candidate mistakes, and like the pollsters, treated the debates as contests, and thus part of the larger horse race" (p. 25).

More recently, Morello (1991) analyzed newspaper editorials that followed presidential election debates. He discovered that 26 of 55 editorials analyzed suggested that the principal criterion for whether a debate has been successful is whether it has established how the candidates differ (p. 117). He noted these newspaper editorials judged debate outcomes in terms of unexpected behaviors, personal style and debate performance. Morello's thesis is that while newspapers plea for substance from debates, their editorial pages look mainly for ways to continue the easiest winner/loser horse race analysis of the campaign.

The second hypothesis grows from research that shows campaign coverage to be dominated by winner/loser or horse race coverage.

H2: Newspapers will focus on horse race (who won/who lost) coverage of the debate.

Shoemaker and Reese (1991) note how the widely held news values of professional journalists affect newsroom decisions (90). The ubiquity of these standards among journalists provide a uniformity to many content decisions.

Conflict and controversy lend news value to issues and events. "Conflict is inherently more interesting than harmony," write Shoemaker and Reese (91). Conflict is inherent to the political process and perhaps to primary and general election debates.

News values are audience-centered, according to Shoemaker and Reese, and editors must determine in assessing news value what is most desirable to the audience (88).

The third hypothesis is based on Shoemaker and Reese's observations, and the generally accepted journalists' tenet that action and conflict are interesting to readers.

H3: Newspapers will focus on action and conflict within the debate.

Clayman (1995) wrote: "News coverage of presidential debates often focuses on a single defining moment which is taken to epitomize the debate in its entirety" (p. 118). He argues that journalists select quotations on three bases – "(a) narrative relevance, (b) conspicuousness, and (c) extractability" (p. 118). These pithy quotes are used to provide the debate with a defining moment, he suggests (p. 119).

This leads to the final hypothesis:

H4: Newspapers will focus on highly quotable bites of the debate.

Method

Benoit et al. (1998) suggest that voting is an inherently comparative process (p. 3). The functional theory of political campaign discourse is based, in part, on this notion that candidates must differentiate among themselves for the electorate (p. 4). Therefore, the scholars suggest, "all political campaign discourse has three potential functions" (p. 13). Those functions are acclaiming oneself, attacking an opponent, or defending oneself (pp. 13-14).

This method of functional analysis was employed in content analyzing two presidential primary debates and select newspaper reporting that followed those debates.

Debates

Democratic and Republican debates on January 5 and 6, 2000, respectively, in New Hampshire were selected for analysis. This selection was based on the importance of New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary, on the fact that front-runner status was not completely established, and because the debates fell back-to-back and therefore might take on additional comparative importance within the media. Debate transcripts were located via online computer search using Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

Candidate utterances were defined as the units of analysis. Utterances were coded first as an acclaim, attack or defense. They were then further defined into policy or character categories. In other words, a candidate can acclaim either a policy consideration or a character trait. For example, when George W. Bush, governor of Texas, said "This is not only no new taxes, this is tax cuts, so help me God," he was acclaiming a policy.

Policy considerations are further defined as past deeds, future plans or general goals. Character is additionally defined as personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals. Returning to Bush's policy acclamation above, it was further defined as a future plan. Bush went on to say, "I...cut the taxes not only [once] in Texas, but twice." This second utterance in the series is another acclaim, but this time it is further defined as a past deed.

Finally, each utterance was coded to indicate the target of the acclaim, attack or defense. In the two examples above, the items were coded as targeting the candidate – Bush was acclaiming himself, his plans and accomplishments.

Defenses were coded with one additional level – strategy of defense. The strategy categories are: simple denial, shift blame, provocation, defeasibility, accident, good intentions, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, compensation and mortification (p. 39). When Al Gore responded to Bill Bradley's allegation regarding attack ads, he said "Now, I didn't say any of the things you heard." Gore's statement was coded as a defense using a simple denial.

Additionally, dominant subjects within the debates were identified by comparing relative amounts of text devoted to each subject area.

Newspaper articles

Newspaper articles were identified via online computer search using Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe. The search was conducted through the news category of Lexis-Nexis and searching articles that contained two candidates' names, and the words "debate" and "New Hampshire"(i.e., Gore + Bradley + debate + New Hampshire). The search was limited to northeastern newspapers as preselected by Lexis-Nexis and to the week of the debates (Sunday, January 2 to Saturday, January 8, 2000). This mode of identifying a sample of articles yielded 48 articles which met the criteria for the Republican debate and 56 articles that met the criteria for the Democratic debate.

News articles were then visually scanned for their appropriateness to be included in the final pool. Only articles that focused on the debate – in which the debate was the subject of more than half the article – were included. The final sample of articles consisted of those printed on January 5, 6 and 7 for the Democratic debate and on January 6, 7 and 8 for the Republican debate. Twenty articles were coded for the Republican debate; 31 for the Democratic debate.

The news articles were coded using the same functional analysis technique described above. However, each article was treated individually. In other words, it was coded only for the content within the article without including any background knowledge the coder may have brought to the reading. So, statements in the context of the debate may have been coded differently when presented in the context of the news article or editorial, depending on how it was presented by the author of the article. This intentional separation was done in an effort to determine how the newspapers represented the debates and how a reader who did not see the debates might interpret the information presented in the newspaper. Furthermore, utterances were coded only when they were clearly attributable to a candidate.

Cohen's (1960) kappa, which controls for agreement by chance, was used to calculate intercoder reliability on 20% of each of the two debates, 20% of the articles on the Republican debate, and 20% of the articles on the Democratic debate. For the debates, the intercoder reliability was 1.0 for functions and .94 for topics. For the newspaper articles, intercoder reliability was 1.0 for functions and .95 for topics. Fleiss (1981) explains that "values [of kappa] greater than .75 or so may be taken to represent excellent agreement beyond chance, values below .40 or so may be taken to represent poor agreement beyond chance, and values between .40 and .75 may be taken to represent fair to good agreement beyond chance." Thus, these values indicate excellent reliability for our analysis.

Results

New Hampshire Democratic Debate

The Democratic debate was on January 5, 2000, in Durham, N. H. Debate participants were candidates Bill Bradley and Al Gore. Questions were posed by journalists Alison King (NECN), John Distaso (Manchester Union Leader), Jenny Attiyeh (NHPTV), and moderator Peter Jennings (ABC).

In response to the first research question ("What are the message functions within a primary debate?") analysis showed that acclaims outnumbered attacks and defenses by a margin of more than two to one (see Table 1).

Table 1: Democrats			
Candidate	***Acclaims***	***Attacks***	***Defenses***
Bradley	45 (52%)	22 (25%)	19 (22%)
Gore	61 (63%)	21 (22%)	15 (15%)
Total	106 (58%)	43 (23%)	34 (19%)

The first hypothesis ("Debates will consist of more acclaims than attacks or defenses") was supported for the Democratic debates.

Subjects that received emphasis during the debate included the environment, especially as it related to logging restrictions in the White Mountain National Forest; gays in the military; gun control; health care; campaign finance; and Congressional votes.

Regarding the logging policy Gore acclaimed, "I believe very strongly in protecting the environment, and I know we can do it in a way that protects our way of life." Bradley countered, "I think mixed use is the proper way to proceed in the White Mountains."

Policy dominated acclaims, attacks and defenses. Seventy-one percent of Bradley's acclaims were related to policy issues; 75% of Gore's acclaims were policy-related (see Table 2). Bradley provided an example of a policy acclaim when he said, "I have proposed registration and licensing of all handguns, all 65 million handguns in America."

Gore acclaimed character ideals when he said, "I think we should be free and open about what our [religious] beliefs are."

Table 2: Democrat Acclaims

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	7 (22%)	9 (28%)	16 (50%)	32 (71%)	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	7 (54%)	13 (29%)
Gore	23 (50%)	6 (13%)	17 (37%)	46 (75%)	4 (27%)	1 (7%)	10 (67%)	15 (25%)

Bradley followed his policy acclamation for handgun registration quickly with an attack on Gore: "Registration and licensing is what we do for automobiles. Why can't we do it for handguns in America and why don't you support it?"

Like acclaims, most attacks were related to policy rather than character. For Bradley, most policy attacks were related to past deeds and were targeted at others in the party – generally Gore. Gore's policy attacks were more focused on future plans and targeted primarily at Bradley. The breakdown between candidates seems logical since Gore, as a two-term vice president, has more past deeds associated with the administration that are susceptible to attack. Bradley, retired from the U.S. Senate since 1995, has fewer recent past deeds to critique. Therefore Gore must attack Bradley's plans (see Table 3).

Defenses was the smallest category for both candidates (see Table 4). Bradley found himself defending against Gore just less than a quarter of the time. Bradley found himself

Table 3: Democrat Attacks

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	7 (44%)	4 (25%)	5 (31%)	16 (73%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	6 (27%)
Gore	5 (33%)	10 (67%)		15 (71%)	4 (67%)	2 (33%)		6 (29%)

defending against accusations of subjects as diverse as being "aloof" and the fairness of his health care program. He defended, when asked about his relationship to the pharmaceutical industry by saying, "Less than one percent of the money that I ever raised when I was running in all my Senate campaigns came from anybody connected to a pharmaceutical company." This defense indicated his past deeds and minimized the importance of the issue with the rejoinder – "So, from my standpoint, that's not a problem."

Bradley's most frequent defensive strategy was to differentiate between the accusation and another interpretation as when he defended against Gore's assertion that his health plan was "capped" by differentiating between a "cap" and a "weighted average." Differentiation was also Gore's favorite defense tactic (see Table 5).

Targets of acclaim (98% both candidates) and defense (100% Bradley/80% Gore) were nearly always the candidate himself. Targets of attack (55% Bradley/90% Gore) were most often others in the party (usually the debate opponent). See Appendix Table I for reporting of targets.

Table 4: Democrat Defenses

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	6 (46%)	7 (54%)		13 (68%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	4 (67%)	6 (32%)
Gore	7 (70%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	10 (67%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	5 (33%)

Table 5: Democrat Defensive Strategies

	Simple Denial	*Shift Blame*	*Minimization*	*Differentiation*	*Transcendence*
Bradley	4 (21%)		4 (21%)	7 (37%)	4 (21%)
Gore	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	6 (40%)	2 (13%)

New Hampshire Republican Debate

The Republican debate was January 6, 2000, in Manchester, N. H. Debate participants were candidates Gary Bauer, George W. Bush, Steve Forbes, Orrin Hatch, Alan Keyes and John McCain. Questions were posed by journalists Alison King (NECN), John Distaso (Manchester Union Leader), Jenny Attiyeh (NHPTV), and moderator Tim Russert (NBC).

Republican candidates Bush and Forbes were most efficient at acclaiming. Nearly three-quarters of Bush's 48 utterances were acclamations. Forbes acclaimed about two-thirds of the time. Two candidates, Bauer and Hatch, launched more attacks than acclaims. Bauer acted as the Republican attack dog – 63% of his utterances were attacks. He seemed to relish the role, responding to a pointed question from Forbes by saying, "You're basically inviting me to attack Governor Bush again, is that right?" Hatch's rhetoric was essentially split between acclaims (48%) and attacks (52%). (See Table 6.)

Bush often acclaimed past deeds as Governor of Texas. "I'm the only one on the stage who's appointed judges," he said noting the importance of Supreme Court justice appointments.

Keyes' tone in a reply to the need to oppose homosexuality is typical of his acclaiming debate rhetoric: "We must oppose it in the military. We must oppose it in marriage."

An initial answer to the first research question ("What are the message functions within a primary debate?") is that acclaims generally outnumbered attacks and defenses among the candidates. This finding also lends support to the first hypothesis ("Debates will consist of more acclaims than attacks or defenses").

Table 6: Republicans			
Candidate	***Acclaims***	***Attacks***	***Defenses***
Bauer	16 (37%)	27 (63%)	
Bush	34 (71%)	8 (17%)	6 (13%)
Forbes	30 (65%)	15 (33%)	1 (2%)
Hatch	14 (48%)	15 (52%)	
Keyes	12 (55%)	8 (36%)	2 (9%)
McCain	25 (61%)	10 (24%)	6 (15%)
Total	131 (57%)	83 (36%)	15 (7%)

Several of the candidates pleaded their favorite causes. Bauer emphasized pro-life issues. Bush featured tax cuts. Forbes highlighted his tax plan. Hatch held a fairly low profile – emphasizing his experience and electability. Keyes focused on his religious convictions and how that affects issues such as abortion, homosexuality and violent media content. McCain emphasized campaign finance reform. Nearly all candidates took quick swipes at topics of gays in the military and the administration's handling of Cuban refugee Elian Gonzalez.

Among acclaims, most of the candidates focused on policy. Keyes broke that mold concentrating his acclaims on character issues (see Table 7).

As previously noted, Bauer far outranked the other candidates in number of attacks, 27, compared to his closest colleagues, Forbes and Hatch with 15 each. Bauer was efficient with his attacks, sometimes launching them in the form of one-liners. He took on Bush frequently as with this expeditious triad attack: "Governor, you left off every values issue at stake: the sanctity of life, maintaining marriage as being between a man and a woman, preserving religious liberty so we can hang up the Ten Commandments again." High profile candidates Bush and McCain attacked with the least frequency (see Table 8).

Table 7: Republican Acclaims

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bauer		12 (86%)	2 (14%)	14 (88%)	1 (50%)		1 (50%)	2 (13%)
Bush	6 (26%)	7 (30%)	10 (43%)	23 (68%)	1 (9%)	5 (45%)	5 (45%)	11 (32%)
Forbes		14 (58%)	10 (42%)	24 (80%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	6 (20%)
Hatch	2 (29%)		5 (71%)	7 (50%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	3 (43%)	7 (50%)
Keyes		1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (33%)			8 (100%)	8 (67%)
McCain	5 (33%)	2 (13%)	8 (53%)	15 (60%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	10 (40%)

Defenses were minimal with Bush and McCain proffering the most. Bauer and Hatch found no need to present defenses (see Table 9). Early in the debate McCain found himself defending a contact made with the FCC on behalf of a contributor. After a meandering defense in which he employed both minimization and differentiation strategies – his strategies of choice, he replied to a direct question from the panel with a simple denial: "I said no at the beginning." Such simple denial was the most often used defense strategy among all candidates (see Table 10).

Table 8: Republican Attacks

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bauer	7 (33%)	4 (19%)	10 (48%)	21 (78%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	6 (22%)
Bush	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	6 (75%)	1 (50%)		1 (50%)	2 (25%)
Forbes	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	8 (62%)	13 (87%)			2 (100%)	2 (13%)
Hatch	3 (60%)		2 (40%)	5 (33%)	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	10 (67%)
Keyes	1 (50%)		1 (50%)	2 (25%)	1 (17%)		5 (83%)	6 (75%)
McCain	2 (25%)	1 (13%)	5 (63%)	8 (80%)		1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (20%)

Targets of acclaim were almost universally, save McCain, focused 100% on the candidate himself. Principal targets of attack varied between others in the party and the establishment. Targets of defense were aimed entirely on the candidate himself (see Table II in Appendix).

News Coverage

Newspaper coverage of the two debates focused most on attacks, followed closely by acclaims and trailed by defenses (see Table 11). Bauer had the highest percentage of attacks

Table 9: Republican Defenses

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bauer								
Bush	1 (50%)	1 (50%)		2 (33%)		1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (67%)
Forbes					1 (100%)			1 (100%)
Hatch								
Keyes					1 (50%)		1 (50%)	2 (100%)
McCain	3 (100%)			3 (50%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	3 (50%)

Table 10: Republican Defensive Strategies

	Simple Denial	*Shift Blame*	*Minimization*	*Differentiation*
Bauer				
Bush	2 (33%)	1 (17%)		3 (50%)
Forbes	1 (100%)			
Hatch				
Keyes	1 (50%)	1 (50%)		
McCain	1 (17%)		3 (50%)	2 (33%)

among all candidates, both Democrat and Republican. Bush had the smallest percentage of attacks covered in the newspaper. This coverage accurately reflects Bauer's status as the attack king, both numerically, among the Republicans, and by percentage, among all candidates. Bush also held the spot for least attacks, by percent, in the debates themselves.

These findings, among others, answer the second research question ("What are the functional debate messages most often covered in newspaper reports?") and supports the third hypothesis ("Newspapers will focus on action and conflict within the debate").

The newspapers were especially partial to pithy statements. Bush made a cogent acclaim when he vowed to cut taxes "so help me God." Bush's acclaim was noted with its accompanying quote in nine of the 20 articles analyzed. It appeared in three story leads.

News coverage of acclaims were most frequently related to policy. Among all eight candidates, the percentage of policy acclaims ranged from 67% to 100% (see Table 12). Gore had the most reported policy acclaims between the Democrats. Bush led the Republicans in the number of policy acclaims reported. It is notable that both these candidates served in elected executive leadership positions, thereby providing them an ample supply of past deeds to acclaim. It is also notable that they both eventually went on to be their party's leading candidates.

Attacks were also subject to the desire for a memorable quote. The most frequently cited succinct attack was lobbed by Bradley. Fourteen of the 31 articles written about the Democratic debate made reference to a statement by Bradley that Gore was holed up time in the "Washington bunker." Of those 14 bunker references, six were in the stories' leads.

Table 11: Newspaper Coverage			
Candidate	***Acclaims***	***Attacks***	***Defenses***
Bradley	50 (36%)	60 (43%)	28 (20%)
Gore	65 (44%)	69 (47%)	13 (9%)
Democrat Total	115 (40%)	129 (45%)	41 (14%)
Bauer	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	
Bush	24 (51%)	16 (34%)	7 (15%)
Forbes	4 (29%)	7 (50%)	3 (21%)
Hatch	3 (100%)		
Keyes	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	
McCain	16 (31%)	18 (35%)	18 (35%)
Republican Total	59 (38%)	68 (44%)	28 (18%)
Combined Total	174 (40%)	197 (45%)	69 (16%)

Table 12: Reported Acclaims								
	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	5 (12%)	12 (28%)	26 (60%)	43 (86%)	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	7 (14%)
Gore	27 (51%)	6 (11%)	20 (38%)	53 (82%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	12 (18%)
D Total	32 (33%)	18 (19%)	46 (48%)	96 (83%)	5 (26%)	10 53%)	4 (21%)	19 (17%)
Bauer		2 (40%)	3 (60%)	5 (100%)				
Bush	3 (14%)	10 (48%)	8 (38%)	21 (88%)		1 (33%)	2 (67%)	3 (13%)
Forbes		1 (33%)	2 (67%)	3 (75%)			1 (100%)	1 (25%)
Hatch			2 (100%)	2 (67%)		1 (100%)		1 (33%)
Keyes		4 (67%)	2 (33%)	6 (86%)			1 (100%)	1 (14%)
McCain	2 (18%)	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	11 (69%)	1 (20%)	4 (80%)		5 (31%)
R Total	5 (10%)	21 (44%)	22 (46%)	48 (81%)	1 (9%)	6 (55%)	4 (36%)	11 (19%)
C Total	37 (21%)	39 (27%)	68 (47%)	144 (82%)	6 (20%)	16 (53%)	8 (27%)	30 (17%)

The *New York Times* saved its reference to Bradley's "bunker" attack until the reader was about one-third into the article. "Mr. Bradley portrayed the vice president as having been so trapped in a 'Washington bunker' that he had lost the ambition to fight for proposals on health care and gun control," reported the *Times*. The reporter followed immediately with a counterattack by Gore: "Mr. Gore suggested that his rival was living in an ivory tower and lacked the know-how to get things done." Because Gore did not provide the journalist with an equivalent to the pithy "bunker"attack, the journalist equated general comments from Gore regarding Bradley's admiration for theoretical ideas to "living in an ivory tower."

The *Boston Globe* set up a similar fight in its lead: "Former Senator Bill Bradley, who once planned an above-the-fray campaign, stopped pulling his punches last night, as he turned on Vice President Al Gore with a withering rebuke" – which leads to the second paragraph's "Washington bunker" reference.

Phrases like these, scattered liberally throughout the articles, provide additional support for the hypothesis predicting a newspaper bent on action and conflict. More importantly, they support for the fourth hypothesis ("Newspapers will focus on highly quotable bites of the debate").

Most of the candidates' reported attacks were focused on policy issues. Six of the eight candidates had at least half of their reported attacks in the policy area. But, Bradley and Keyes attacked policy only about one-third of the time, according to the newspapers (see Table 13).

The newspapers reported few defenses – 69 in all, accounting for 16% of total functional utterances (see Table 14). This compares favorably with content of the actual debates (7%

defenses among Republicans; 19% between Democrats). The reporting of defenses is also comparable in terms of who did most defending in the debates. Both Gore and Bradley mounted defenses, as did Bush and McCain. The defenses noted by journalists fell into only three categories (see Table 15).

Table 13: Reported Attacks

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	11(58%)	4 (21%)	4 (21%)	19 (32%)	14 (34%)	1 (2%)	26 (63%)	41(68%)
Gore	26 (46%)	28 (49%)	3 (5%)	57 (83%)	10 (34%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (17%)
D Total	37 (49%)	32 (42%)	7 (9%)	76 (59%)	24 (45%)	2 (4%)	27 (51%)	53 (41%)
Bauer	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	12 (60%)	1 (13%)		7 (88%)	8 (40%)
Bush		10 (91%)	1 (9%)	11 (69%)	1 (20%)		4 (80%)	5 (31%)
Forbes	7 (100%)			7 (100%)				
Hatch								
Keyes			2 (100%)	2 (29%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	5 (71%)
McCain		7 (78%)	2 (22%)	9 (50%)	2 (22%)	1 (11%)	6 (67%)	9 (50%)
R Total	13 (10%)	21 (44%)	7 (46%)	41 (61%)	6 (22%)	2 (7%)	19 (70%)	27 (40%)
C Total	50 (43%)	53 (45%)	14 (12%)	117 (59%)	30 (38%)	4 (5%)	46 (58%)	80 (41%)

McCain made one of the most oft-noted defenses in response to accusations of his applying a double standard on campaign finance reform. He used a minimization defense strategy regarding the apparent impropriety in his making a plea to the FCC on behalf of a contributor to his campaign. His defense was quoted in several news articles saying the current system: "taints all of us, no matter what we do.... We're all under a cloud of suspicion."

Table 14: Reported Defenses

	Policy				**Character**			
	Deeds	*Plans*	*Goals*	*Total*	*PQual*	*Leader*	*Ideals*	*Total*
Bradley	17 (65%)	9 (35%)		26 (93%)	2 (100%)			2 (7%)
Gore	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	11 (85%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)		2 (15%)
D Total	25 (68%)	10 (27%)	2 (5%)	37 (90%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)		4 (10%)
Bauer								
Bush		3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4 (57%)			3 (100%)	3 (43%)
Forbes					2 (67%)		1 (33%)	3 (100%)
Hatch								
Keyes								
McCain	12 (86%)	2 (14%)		14 (78%)		2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4 (22%)
R Total	12 (67%)	5 (28%)	1 (6%)	18 (64%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	10 (36%)
C Total	37 (67%)	15 (27%)	3 (5%)	55 (80%)	5 (36%)	3 (21%)	6 (43%)	14 (20%)

Table 15: Reported Defensive Strategies

	Simple Denial	*Shift Blame*	*Minimization*	*Differentiation*
Bradley	11 (39%)		8 (29%)	9 (32%)
Gore	2 (15%)		6 (46%)	5 (38%)
D Total	13 (32%)		14 (34%)	14 (34%)
Bauer				
Bush	2 (29%)		2 (29%)	3 (43%)
Forbes	2 (67%)			1 (33%)
Hatch				
Keyes				
McCain	2 (11%)		14 (78%)	2 (11%)
R Total	6 (21%)		16 (57%)	6 (21%)
C Total	19 (28%)		30 (43%)	20 (30%)

Support for the second hypothesis ("Newspapers will focus on horse race (who won/who lost) coverage of the debate") was mixed. Horse race coverage could not be directly addressed via functional content analysis of the news stories. A count of the number of articles that directly addressed who was ahead in the polls found only eight articles among the 51 coded for both debates. By that standard the horse race implications were modest. However, by setting up the context of the debates as they did, reporters created a win/loss scenario where attacks were represented as more frequent than they actually occurred. This could be interpreted as an attempt to shift the debate coverage in the direction of the horse race, but additional analysis would need to be done to make this claim with certainty.

To address the final research question ("Does newspaper coverage of functional messages within the debate accurately portray the messages that actually occurred during the debate?") we need to compare the data presented thus far. In terms of the three broad functional categories, it is clear that newspaper coverage does not mirror the reality of the debates. In both debates, acclaims far outnumbered attacks (58% acclaims/23% attacks between Democrats; 57% acclaims/36% attacks among Republicans). However, the newspapers represented attacks as slightly more dominant than acclaims. Newspaper reports of attacks showed 45% attacks between Democrats and 44% among Republicans. A chi-square test for significance showed that there was a significant difference (< .001) between the emphasis of accalims, attacks and defenses in the debate and the coverage that appeared in the newspapers. This significant difference between actual and reported functions was true for both debates.

Furthermore, the newspapers focused more on policy than character issues – which reflected reality. However, the newspaper emphasis on policy was stronger than what actually occurred. But there was not a significant difference, using chi-square test, between debate utterances and newspaper coverage.

Among Republicans, there was clear emphasis on Bush and McCain in the media. Though these two Republicans did dominate the debate, it was not to the point of exclusion of other candidates as was represented in the newspaper. The Republican debate did draw fire on this point, however. Tim Russert, NBC newsman and moderator of the Republican debate, was publicly accused of favoring Bush and McCain by the Manchester *Union Leader*, one of the sponsors of the debate.

In summary, the answer to the third research question lies throughout the findings. Newspapers often found more conflict in the debates than actually occurred and highlighted single sensational statements.

Implications and Conclusion

This research provides a much-needed window into how newspapers cover presidential primary election debates. The data provide a good news/bad news story.

Unlike coverage of the campaign in general, coverage of the debates seems less obviously focused on the horse race or who won. The coverage appears to focus on policy issues more than character issues that come out in the debates. These provide good news for improving voters' knowledge.

The bad news is that, because conflict is inherently interesting it takes on a disproportionate role in the news coverage. This may be harmful even to those who watched the debate since research has found that voters change their minds on issues of even the greatest importance based on the influence of commentators within the media (e.g., Steeper, 1978). The solution to this problem may be elusive since conflict is such a staple of news. Still, journalists would be well-advised to work toward more accurate proportional coverage of candidates' attacks and acclaims.

Additional research in the area is needed to determine whether these initial findings are replicated in analysis of other primary debates and the news coverage that accompanies them. Furthermore, a similar comparison to broadcast news coverage would be useful in determining whether the attack dominance persists between media. It seems likely that the time-sensitive nature of broadcast news would focus even more on conflict and pithy quotes to the exclusion of broader policy issues.

In summary, candidates in two presidential primary debates were more likely to acclaim their policies than to attack the policies of their opponents. They focused more on policy than character issues. Newspapers focused on attacks more than acclaims – creating an active and conflict-laden environment. But journalistic coverage maintained the dominance of policy over character issues.

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Appendices

Table I: Democrat Targets of Acclaim

Candidate	***Candidate***	***Establishment***
Bradley	44 (98%) / 50 (100%)*	1 (2%)
Gore	60 (98%) / 64 (98%)	1 (2%) / 1 (2%)

Democrat Targets of Attack

Candidate	***Others in party***	***Establishment***	***Republicans***	***Clinton***
Bradley	12 (55%) / 49 (82%)	7 (32%) / 2 (3%)		3 (14%) / 9 (15%)
Gore	19 (90%) / 67 (97%)	/ 1 (1%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%) / 1 (1%)

Democrat Targets of Defense

Candidate	***Candidate***	***Others in party***	***Establishment***	
Bradley	19 (100%) / 28 (100%)			
Gore	12 (80%) / 7 (54%)	1 (7%)	2 (13%) / 6 (46%)	

* debate/news coverage

Table II: Republican Targets of Acclaims			
Candidate	***Candidate***	***Party***	***Establishment***
Bauer	16 (100%) / 5 (100%)*		
Bush	34 (100%) / 23 (96%)		/ 1 (4%)
Forbes	30 (100%) / 4 (100%)		
Hatch	14 (100%) / 3 (100%)		
Keyes	12 (100%) / 6 (86%)	/ 1 (14%)	
McCain	23 (92%) / 15 (94%)	1 (4%) /	1 (4%) / 1 (6%)
Republican Targets of Attacks			
Candidate	***Others in party***	***Establishment***	***Democrats***
Bauer	17 (63%) / 10 (50%)	7 (26%) / 6 (30%)	3 (11%) / 4 (20%)
Bush	5 (63%) / 16 (100%)	3 (34%) /	
Forbes	5 (33%) / 1 (14%)	9 (60%) / 5 (71%)	1 (7%) / 1 (14%)
Hatch	5 (33%) /	7 (47%) /	3 (20%) /
Keyes	4 (50%) / 7 (100%)	4 (50%) /	
McCain	7 (70%) / 7 (94%)	3 (30%) /	/ 1 (6%)
Republican Targets of Defenses			
Candidate	***Candidate***	***Others in party***	***Establishment***
Bauer			
Bush	6 (100%) / 7 (100%)		
Forbes	1 (100%) / 3 (100%)		
Hatch			
Keyes	/ 2 (100%)		
McCain	6 (100%) / 18 (100%)		

*debate / news coverage

Table III: Newspaper Coverage

Newspaper	*# articles*	*News*	*Editorial*	*HRace*	*Russert*	*Lawsuit*
Associated Press	13 / 3*	13 / 3		3 /		
Bergen Co. (NJ) Record	/ 1	/ 1				
Boston Globe	3 / 4	2 / 4	1 /			
Boston Herald	3 / 3	2 / 3	1 /	1 / 1	/ 1	
NY Daily News	2 / 1	1 / 1	1 /			
NY Post	1 /	1 /		1 /		
NY Times	4 / 5	3 / 3	1 / 2	/ 1	/ 1	
Providence Journal	1 /	1 /				
Quincy (MA) Patriot Ledger	1 /	1 /				
Manchester Union Leader	2 / 2	2 / 2		1 /	/ 1	1 / 1
Worcester Telegram/Gazette	1 / 1	1 /	/ 1			
Total	31 / 20	27 / 17	4 / 3	6 / 2	/ 3	1 / 1

* Democrat coverage / Republican coverage

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TO QUELL THE QUARRELS
--EXAMINING *THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*'S ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN COVERAGE

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Abstract

To Quell the Quarrels -- Examining *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s Israeli/Palestinian Coverage

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The Philadelphia Inquirer has been receiving criticism from both the Jewish and Palestinian communities concerning the paper's Mideast coverage. In response, a content analysis was conducted by the LSU research team to examine the coverage. Results revealed that the *Inquirer* provided its audience with a great deal of information about the conflict. This study found that the paper provided a balanced coverage of both political entities. Weakness in coverage rested mainly in heavy reliance on Israeli sources compared with Palestinian sources. After the study result was presented, critique decreased substantially and the editors at the *Inquirer* were able to improve their Mideast coverage with the research findings.

To Quell the Quarrels --
Examining *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s Israeli/Palestinian Coverage

Introduction

Newspaper editors often encounter complaints voiced by irate readers who are upset by a particular article or editorial. The complex issues, lasting conflicts, and intense passions generated from the Mideast are particularly likely to yield such familiar criticism. The editors of the Philadelphia *Inquirer* noticed that readers from both the Jewish and Palestinian communities were equally critical of the paper's Mideast coverage. The editors were accordingly frustrated dealing with Mideast topics.

When the *Jewish Exponent*, a newspaper that circulates in the metropolitan Philadelphia Jewish community, set up a Web site that complained about the *Inquirer*, editors decided it was time to have Mideast coverage independently evaluated so as to see whether either group had a basis to complain. They hoped this effort would not only result in an across-the-board, objective assessment but also provide guidance for improving future coverage on the subject and solid evidence to curtail criticism. Presented in this paper are the results of the systematic audit of the paper's Mideast coverage during the 1/1998-10/1998 period conducted by a research team in a state university in the South. It is the researchers' hope that the report of this case study can shed some light on the treatment of controversial issues the newspaper community faces everyday.

Bias is extremely difficult to identify. A factual statement to one person may very well be deemed a biased one to another. It is then unsurprising that scholars and news professionals argue that bias, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.[1] In this particular case, both Israeli and Palestinian supporters contended that the paper's coverage was biased and demanded a drastic change. In addition, the researchers found that many of the critiques are not fact-based but predominantly emotionally oriented. It is concluded that it is probably unfruitful and unrealistic to gather readers' loaded opinions on how to improve the paper's coverage.

The researchers, therefore, decided to conduct an impartial, objective content analysis to investigate whether the paper has achieved balance and fairness, the journalistic tenets that lay the foundation of media credibility and ethics. As media scholars suggested[2], we defined the concepts of fairness and balance as equal treatment or representation of both parties. In practice, we used several coding items--source, mention, and general reading of text and picture--to see whether fairness and balance were reached in *Inquirer*'s Mideast coverage. Using sources on both sides of a given controversial issue can effectively avoid bias[3] and often is a standard way for reporters to strike balance. Mention of various points of view in the headline, lead, or body of a news story is also easy for coders to monitor. The general evaluation (positive-negative leaning) of the entire news story for either political entity, however, can be a bit challenging. To improve intracoder and intercoder reliability, more than one researcher coded the overall portrayal of both political entities during the time frame and all of the coders went through lengthy training to ensure coding quality.

In addition to the above attributes of the news stories that might contribute to the canon of balance and fairness, the researchers were also interested in the story frames the reporters used in describing the long-term conflict. Research has shown that newspaper readers might not be as careful as the editors[4] regarding source use in a story. A significant frame might be as irritating as any discrepant element included in a story. A great number of empirical studies[5] justified our choice of coding framing in each story. Therefore, frames that were used in the stories were spotted and recorded systematically in this project. The varied contributors of the Israeli/Palestinian stories might be a great source for researchers to trace the origin of the potential differences in coverage. As one of the benefits of doing quantitative content analysis, the coverage contributed by different providers—wire services or in-house correspondents—can be compared and analyzed.

Methodology

This study used content analysis to transform the selected information in the *Inquirer* into objective numbers that can be analyzed to assess the newspaper's balance. This study systematically looked at (1) the general portrayal of each party involved; (2) the sources of information adopted in the stories; (3) the topics covered in the stories; and (4) various other aspects of the stories – such as length, placement, and dateline. The sample of the entire *Inquirer* content during the time frame is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here.

The research team conducted a pilot study prior to designing a coding scheme to identify the topics, perspectives, and judgments embedded in or embraced by the news stories. The *Inquirer* provided all of the hard copies of the content in the study. The coders were instructed to select stories that may fall into any of the following categories: (1) Israel (excluding stories about the holocaust and other related topics when they were entirely unrelated to Mideast conflict); (2) Palestine; (3) general Mideast conflict (related to Israelis and/or Palestinians). All three categories of stories were included in the study.

The coding scheme (see Appendix) was designed for regular stories or news briefs. The following items were included: date, story type, dateline, news provider/writer, story length, news provider, source of information used in the story, mention of each political entity, topic, story frame, and general reading of the whole story. Whenever a photo/graphic was present, coders evaluated the photo/graphic's headline and caption, and identified the source of the photo/graphic.

The researchers extensively trained the three graduate students until all of them demonstrated a satisfactory level of coding quality. The research team first conducted a pilot test to ensure the coding scheme's applicability, reliability, and thoroughness. The coders were then brought together for a final training session. Any areas where the coders had difficulties in pilot study (defined as less than 70% agreement rate among the three coders on any given category) were discussed in training sessions to assure the coders complete the project in a consistent manner. As a result, a correlation of 90% or higher in each coding item was achieved. Each coder was randomly assigned issues of the *Inquirer* sample. Randomization was to make sure that no one coder was solely responsible for any one time period. This precaution was included to increase coding reliability. The coders filled in a single coding sheet for each unit of content (news story, brief, or stand-alone photo) and then entered the data into computer. The data was analyzed with a statistical analysis program (SPSS).

Findings

The *Inquirer* prominently displayed most of the news stories in the study. Seventy-one percent of them appeared in the first four pages of the A section. Fifteen percent appeared on the front page. Most of the news stories had datelines from inside Israel (excluding disputed territories), with the greatest percentage in Jerusalem (49% of the news stories). Only 10% of news stories had U.S. datelines. News briefs generally were not datelined. The *Inquirer* devoted a significant amount of space to coverage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The average number of paragraphs per story is 14, with a total of 3,762 paragraphs all together. Fifty (18%) were briefs containing only one or two paragraphs. *Inquirer* correspondents and the Knight-Ridder group contributed about one-third of the content, the AP contributed nearly as much, and the remaining third originated from a variety of other sources. Although several *Inquirer*/Knight-Ridder reporters had bylines, one reporter--Barbara Demick--wrote the majority of stories (32 out of 69 bylined stories).

General reading of articles. After reading an entire article, coders categorized it as positive, neutral, negative or mixed for each political entity involved in the story. "Positive," "negative," and "neutral" in this case do not equate to the fairness of coverage. Rather they describe the overall impression of the event that *an average, impartial reader* would form. For example, a story about a leader calling for peace talks generally would be coded positively for the political entity to which that leader belonged. Similarly, setbacks to peace generally were coded negatively. These categorizations, in other words, describe the overall image of a given political entity in a particular story.

With the exception of the United States and United Nations stories, the coders determined that more than one-third of the stories negatively portrayed the political entities included (see Table 2). Nearly the same percentage of stories on Israel and the Palestinians were considered negative. Nearly two-thirds of the U.S. stories and 82% of the U.N. stories were considered neutral. The briefs tended to be neutral more frequently than news stories. However, the briefs were coded more negatively toward Palestinians and other Mideast political entities than were the news stories.

Table 2 about here.

Sources used. Israeli sources (government officials, groups, citizens, etc.) were used more frequently than Palestinian and U.S. sources. One measure of this is the percentages of stories in which no sources from a particular political entity were used. For example, only 20% of the stories did not use Israeli sources, while twice as many lacked Palestinian sources. Other measures include the total number of sources for all stories and the average number of sources used per story. The following table illustrates the use of sources:

Table 3 about here.

As Table 4 indicates, the briefs contained few, if any, identified sources. But when sources were used they were mostly Israeli. Eighty percent of the briefs contained no Palestinian sources compared with 32% of the news stories. Forty-six percent of the briefs used no Israeli sources (versus 14% of the news stories).

Table 4 about here.

The balance between Israelis and the Palestinians was much better in news stories than in briefs. As Table 5 shows, non-Israeli sources – including Palestinians and Americans – are less likely to be used in regular news stories than in news briefs. This indicates that Israel is more apt to attract news spotlight and only when space allows, other perspectives were included.

Table 5 about here.

Twenty-three topics (either primary or secondary) were identified by coders. Sixty-five stories (24%) were found to focus on peace initiatives as the primary topic. Arab or Palestinian terrorism (i.e., politically motivated violence by Palestinian factions against Israelis; almost always the terms "terrorism" or "terrorist" were used) was the second most frequent topic (30 stories, 11%). The next most frequent topics (all about 7%) were Israeli politics, Arab/Palestinian riots, Israeli West Bank settlements and U.S. reaction. News stories were most likely to focus on peace (14%), while the briefs were more likely to focus on Arab/Palestinian terrorism (22%) and Israeli military action (16%).

Overall, 54% of the news stories had no secondary topic. About 84% of the briefs had no secondary topic, compared with 48% of the news stories. Among the stories containing a second topic, peace was the most frequent theme (about 11% of all stories). The next most frequent secondary topics were U.S. reactions, stories describing the aftermath of some spot news, and Israeli West Bank settlements.

Frames. Another element examined is the frames that appeared in the stories. Frames identify the larger context of the incident or event covered in a story. For example, the topic of the story might involve an election or a riot; but the context is the effect the event might have on the peace negotiation process. The frame is the peace process; the topic is the specific event that has triggered concern about the peace process.

After the pilot study was completed, the following recurrent frames were identified: (1) the peace process–inclusion of current initiatives or setbacks in trying to achieve peace in the Mideast. (2) Israel's security–inclusion of threats to Israel's security whether from terrorism, discussions over territory possession that might leave Israel without secure borders, political entanglements, etc. (3) Palestinian terrorism – inclusion of acts of terrorism or the threat of terrorism directed toward Israel from some Palestinian factions. (4) Palestinian independence – discussion of a Palestinian homeland or other political issues that encourage or discourage Palestinian autonomy. (5) Israeli religious fundamentalism – discussion of actions by fundamental political or religious groups that might be decisive in fostering public policy, religious fervor, or political balance of power. More than one frame might be included in a single story, so the percentages presented in Table 6 do not equal 100%.

Table 6 about here.

Photographs and graphics. In considering the impact of the 107 photographs and graphics included with news stories, the coders read captions and any headlines that were applicable. Thirty percent of the news stories included a photograph or graphic. Eighty-one percent included one photo, 13% contained two photos and 6% had three photos. AP, providing 52 (49%) of the 107 photos published, contributes substantially to the pictorial representation of the Mideast conflict.

Coders indicated whether the photograph headlines were primarily positive, neutral or negative. It is worth noting that a story may have more than one photo and all of the photos were coded and presented in Tables 7 and 8. The photo headlines for other political entities (including the U.S. and the U.N.) were mostly positive or neutral. Rating for photo captions (Table 8) were quite similar to the headline ratings – Israel received more neutral photos while Palestine more negative pictorial coverage.

Tables 7 & 8 about here.

A total of 54% of the stories included photographs, with 71% including one, 18% including two, and 11% including three photos. The coding results of headlines, photos, and captions combined show that Israel had about same percentages of positive and negative images while Palestinian counterpart had slightly higher percentage of negative image than positive. Most of the pictorial presentation, however, falls into the neutral category.

Dispersion of Mideast news. About 43 stories were published in each of these three months: January, May and October 1998. These three months account for about 45% of all the stories published. The fewest number of stories were published in February, June, July and September (between 14 and 17 stories each). The dip in coverage was due, at least in part, to major developments in other locations. For example the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal absorbed a number of column inches in February. Also, there was major U.S. military action against Iraq. The two most prolific *Inquirer* reporters, Demick and Donnelly, both reported from Iraq, rather than Israel, during that month. Israel's 50th anniversary (which received substantial attention in the *Inquirer*) and President Clinton's attempts to negotiate a peace agreement accounted in part for peaks in coverage in other periods.

Analysis of Associated Press coverage. The *Inquirer* used a large number of articles supplied by the Associated Press (82 out of a total of 222). As a result, it is worth noting how AP stories compared with stories generated by the staff of the *Inquirer* or its parent company wire service.

Almost 44% of the AP stories had Jerusalem datelines, an additional 27% had West Bank datelines, while only about 4% had U.S. datelines. The stories supplied by the AP averaged about 14 paragraphs each and totaled 1,121 paragraphs. This is 30% of the 3,762 paragraphs in news articles included in this study. (It is possible that some of the briefs were supplied by AP, but not identified as such.) In addition, AP relied more on Israeli sources than Palestinian or U.S. sources as Table 9 illustrates.

Table 9 about here.

AP stories tended to mention Israel and Palestinians nearly equally (99% mentioned Israel and 94% mentioned Palestinians), while the U.S. was mentioned in 67% of the stories. Only 9% mentioned the U.N.

The highest concentration of topics for AP stories included peace (24% as the primary topic and 12% as the secondary topic), Israeli politics (11%), and Israeli West Bank settlements (11%). When secondary topics are included, emphasis on the aftermath of specific events and U.S. reaction occurs in about 12% of the stories. General reading coding of AP stories was slightly more negative toward Israel and a little more neutral toward Palestinians than the *Inquirer* coverage overall (see Table 10). Twenty-eight percent of the AP stories were accompanied by photographs (90% of these included only one photograph).

Table 10 about here.

Analysis of Inquirer and Knight-Ridder coverage. An analysis of 84 *Inquirer*/Knight-Ridder-originated stories showed that 44% had Jerusalem datelines. But a higher percentage of these stories originated in the United States than was the case with AP stories (26% compared with 4%). The *Inquirer*/Knight-Ridder stories are also a bit longer than the AP stories, averaging about 23 paragraphs each for a total of 1,829 paragraphs (50% of all paragraphs). As the AP counterparts, they are more likely to rely on Israeli sources than any other source (see Table 11).

Table 11 about here.

These stories were only slightly more likely to mention Israel (98%) than Palestinians (91%). These stories also were quite likely to mention the United States. (82%). Thirty percent focused on the peace process as the primary topic, and an additional 16% had the peace process as the secondary topic. U.S. reactions and Arab/Palestinian riots each accounted for about 10%. The peace process was the predominant frame (63%), followed by Palestinian terrorism (30%), Israel's security (31%), Palestinian independence (20%) and Israeli fundamentalism (12%).

The general reading shows that Israel was presented more positively (and less negatively) than Palestinians, but the majority for all political entities were neutral, as Table 12 indicates.

Table 12 about here.

In essence, the results indicate that overall the portrayal of the two political entities is balanced – either party had roughly equal percentage of positive, neutral, or negative coverage in the time frame. Yet, the Israeli sources were twice as frequently used as were Palestinian counterparts and almost three times as often as were U.S. sources. As to frames used in the stories, the peace process was the most dominant frame, followed by Israel's security and Palestinian terrorism frames. In other words, the paper seemed to latently advocate for peace in the region. Lastly, the stories that derived from different providers did depict the Mideast scenario slightly differently. AP stories were slightly more negative toward Israel and a little more neutral toward Palestinians than the *Inquirer* coverage.

Discussion

The results do not mean that the *Inquirer* should have avoided covering negative events or the wrong doings of any political entity. The purpose of including these categories was to determine whether one political entity was consistently being portrayed as taking actions that had negative consequences either for themselves or for others while another entity was consistently portrayed as taking the moral high road or was behaving positively in some other way. It should also be kept in mind that in a given period one entity or another may have acted in ways that make negative or positive "general reading" inevitable. Coders did not have trouble coding blatant violence as negative toward the perpetrating political entity, whether Palestinian or Israeli. If the acts resulted in injury or death or if one entity clearly was throwing up roadblocks to a peace agreement, the story was coded as negative toward the perpetrating political entity.

Sometimes, the line between neutral and positive was more difficult to assess because a balanced account of some event might be viewed as positive by an interested or knowledgeable reader (or coder) and neutral by another who had less knowledge of the event. If two coders disagreed on any of the more subjective code categories, a faculty member read the article and reconciled the coding.

The *Inquirer* provided its audience a great deal of information about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. This coverage was not easy to provide; yet the *Inquirer* consistently reported major developments in the peace process and provided background into the U.S. role. This indicates that the *Inquirer* was trying hard to keep in touch with its audience by providing Mideast coverage. This kind of high quality journalistic endeavor and service should be applauded.

Weakness in coverage rested mainly in heavy reliance on Israeli sources and viewpoints compared with Palestinian sources and viewpoints. Given Israel's sophistication in reporter relations and communications infrastructure, it is obvious why the *Inquirer* and other newspapers base their correspondent there. The newspaper ought to seriously consider whether this tendency might have colored the reporting more than it should.

The Israeli perspective was presented more frequently, at least in AP stories, than was the U.S. perspective. Studies have shown over and over that international coverage is filtered through a U.S. political prism[6]. However, we did not notice many stories or editorial material that explored the U.S. political interest in the Mideast. Such an unprecedented, impartial reporting is worth noting. Nevertheless, the *Inquirer* could be more diligent in explaining the relevance of Mideast politics to U.S. readers. Since the U.S. has been heavily involved in the peace negotiation process, its role should have been examined and explained more thoroughly.

AP stories tended to be more negative toward Israel than are the *Inquirer*-produced stories. This finding is intriguing, particularly AP supposedly has a huge impact on international coverage nationwide—perhaps it is worth doing a research to examine the entire AP wire on the subject. Although *Inquirer* editors cannot control how the AP reports, they can select which AP stories they choose to use to supplement their own coverage. Interestingly, the tendency of the AP stories was balanced out by *Inquirer*-produced stories, which tended to be more negative toward Palestine.

Once the study was completed, the *Inquirer* editors put the audit results on the paper's Web site, publicized the study result, and offered two on-site presentations made by the independent researchers. During the presentations, concerned readers, the paper's editors, and the researchers got the chance to extensively discuss the paper's Mideast coverage. The international editors and reporters of the paper subsequently adjusted the coverage based on the study's suggestion. The result has led a sharp reduction in the number of complaints they receive (in effect, only two since the study was posted). Both the readers and the newspaper benefited a lot from taking the time to evaluate Mideast coverage. The paper's conscious endeavor to serve its readers and the implementation of rigorous, scientific research result in a great success and may well present an answer to other news media in similar situation.

Appendix
Coding Scheme for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* Project

News Story/ News Brief

Guide: How to select news stories that take on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians? First, check the headline, lead, and dateline to see whether the story would be related. Include and code the story if the subject is related to any of the following categories: Israel (excluding those stories related to NAZI-holocaust or other stories that are entirely unrelated to Mideast conflict); Palestinians; and general Mideast conflict (related to Israelis and Palestinians).
Story number __ __ __ [such as 001, 034, 136, etc., also put down the number beside the story on newspaper.]
Date __ __ / __ __ / __ __ [month/day/year]
Story type __ 1. regular news story 2. news brief 3. stand-alone photo
Story location __ __ __ [enter the 3-digit page number e.g., 01B or 12C]
Dateline __ __

01. West Bank
02. Jerusalem
03. Golan Heights
04. Gaza Strip
05. other part of Israel or Israeli occupied area
06. Other Mideast political entities (such as Jordan, Egypt, or Lebanon)
07. the U.S.
08. the U.N.
09. European countries (such as U.K., France, Switzerland)
10. other locales of the world
11. not included in the news story

Total number of paragraphs __ __ [if it's photo caption, enter 01]
News providers/writers: __ __ [if it's photo caption, enter 00 here]

1. AP
2. UPI
3. AFP
4. Reuters
5. Knight-Ridder group
6. other news agency
7. combination of wires
8. other newspaper such as NYT or WP
9. *Inquirer*'s own correspondent/reporter name:____________________
10. other provider

Number of **news sources** in the story [enter the number]:
[Sources are defined as people, agents, organizations, or governments where the information used in the story comes from. Sources can be direct quotes, information paraphrased by reporters, or stated in other fashions. A given source should only be counted as one, even though that source might be quoted several times in the news story.]
__ Palestinians
__ Israelis
__ Americans

__ People/officials from other Mideast countries
__ U.N. officials
__ other

Countries/political entities mentioned in the news: [enter 1 for yes; 0 for no]
__ Palestinians
__ Israel
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.
__ other Mideast country/political entity #1 [enter the name _______________]
__ other Mideast country/political entity #2 [enter the name _______________]
__ other countries

Main topic of the story __ __
[Main topic is defined as the single topic covered in the *headline*, *sub-headline*, or *lead paragraph* of the story. The categories of topics are listed below.]

Secondary topic __ __
[Secondary topic is defined as an individual topic that *immediately follows the main topic* in the news story regardless of the location. For example, if headline covers one topic and the lead paragraph mentions another. Then the topic of the first sentence of the lead paragraph should be coded as the secondary topic. Coders are advised to make their coding decision right after they read the first sentence of the paragraph that follows the main topic. If there is no secondary topic, enter 00]

1. Israeli military/police action
2. aftermath of accident/incident
3. peace-negotiating meeting/proceeding
4. Arab/Palestinian terrorism
5. Arab/Palestinian riot/protest
6. Israeli protest/demonstration
7. politics or inner debates within Israel
8. politics or inner debates among Palestinians
9. economic issues/ interests
10. Israeli West-Bank settlements
11. laws/ legal problems
12. historical/ contextual background reporting
13. religious matters/ practices
14. U.S. reaction or attitudes
15. Palestinian reaction (verbal statement from leader or spokesperson)
16. Palestinian retaliation (procedures taken)
17. Israeli's reaction (verbal statement)
18. Israeli's retaliation (procedures taken)
19. Mideast or Muslim's reaction in general (e.g., Egypt, Iran…)
20. Non-Israeli Jew's reaction (American Jew, Russian Jew…)
21. other nationality's reaction (e.g., France, Germany…)
22. human interests/ humanitarian report
23. other
24. Palestinian police authority/action

Frames used in the story (1 yes; 0 no)
__ Palestinian terrorist/terrorism
__ Palestinian independence movement
__ Israel's security/safety
__ Israeli (fundamentalist) religious/right-wing tenacity
__ peace processes/ negotiations

General reading of the whole story
[Coders should read the *whole* news story or the photo caption and gauge the fundamental stance or perspective of the text.]
Key: positive 1 2 3 4 5 negative
(3, neutral; 0, when not applied; *6, mixed* – including both positive and negative elements.)
[Note: The keys of 1 and 5 are used *only* when the stance of the article is extremely clear and strong. For example, Palestinian terrorists claimed an explosion that took place and were vehemently and concurrently condemned by the sources quoted in the news stories. Then coders should code 5 on Palestinians.]
__ Israel
__ Palestinians
__ other Mideast country/political entity
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.

Photo/graphic __ 1. yes 2. no
How many photo/graphic (presented alone or accompanied with the story) __
[Definitions: *Only the party* that is depicted *as responsible for the acts* or activities should be coded. Therefore, a picture showing wounded Israelis caused by Palestinians' violence acts would require coders to code negative on Palestinians, but enter "0" on other parties. Suppose a picture shows meeting or talking between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, then the coder would code neutral on Israel and Palestinians. If U.S. president shakes hands with Yessar Arafat, then both the U.S. and Palestinians would be checked as positive while other parties listed below would be checked as 0.]
1st photo/graphic's *headline* (if any) coding:

Key: positive 1 2 3 4 5 negative (3 neutral; 0 when not applied)
__ Israel
__ Palestinians
__ other Mideast country
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.

1st photo/graphic with caption coding (coders should evaluate the combined effect of the picture *and* caption that explains it).
Key: positive 1 2 3 4 5 negative (3 neutral; 0 when not applied)
__ Israel
__ Palestinians
__ other Mideast country/political entity
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.

1st photo/graphic providers: __ __

1. AP
2. UPI
3. AFP
4. Reuters
5. Knight-Ridder group
6. other news agency
7. combination of wires
8. other newspaper such as NYT or WP
9. *Inquirer's* own correspondent/reporter
10. Other

2nd photo/graphic's *headline* (if any) coding:
Key: positive 1 2 3 4 5 negative (3 neutral; 0 when not applied)
__ Israel
__ Palestinians
__ other Mideast country/political entity
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.

2nd photo/graphic with caption coding (coders should evaluate the combined effect of the picture *and* caption that explains it).
Key: positive 1 2 3 4 5 negative (3 neutral; 0 when not applied)
__ Israel
__ Palestinians
__ other Mideast country/political entity
__ the U.S.
__ the U.N.

2nd photo/graphic providers: __ __
01. AP 02. UPI 03. AFP 04. Reuters 05. Knight-Ridder group 06. other news agency 07. combination of wires 08. other newspaper such as NYT or WP 09. *Inquirer's* own correspondent/reporter 10. other

Table 1: *Inquirer* content elements analyzed

Content Type	Number of Elements Coded
News stories	222
Briefs	50
Stand-alone photos	8
Graphics/photos with stories	107
Total	387

Table 2: General readings of 280 articles by political entity

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mixed
Israel	42 (17%)	97 (39%)	97 (39%)	12 (5%)
Palestinians	30 (14%)	97 (44%)	84 (39%)	8 (4%)
Other Mideast Political entity	14 (21%)	28 (41%)	24 (35%)	2 (3%)
U.S.	41 (34%)	71 (59%)	8 (7%)	
U.N.	2 (18%)	9 (82%)		

Table 3: Analysis of sources in the 280 articles*

Political entity	Articles in which a source from this entity was not present	Total times a source from this entity was used	Average number of sources per article
Israelis	53 (20%)	677	2.5
Palestinians	111 (41%)	360	1.3
Americans	170 (63%)	236	.87
People/officials from other Mideast political entities	242 (90%)	51	.18
U.N. officials	261 (96%)	18	.06
Other nationalities	242 (90%)	40	.15

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*The coders noted whether a story mentioned Israel, Palestinians, the U.N., etc. Again, more stories mentioned Israel than any other political entity. The United States was mentioned far less often than Israel or Palestinians.

Table 4: Political entities named in the 280 articles

Political entities	n	%
Israel	261	96%
Palestinians	236	87%
U.S.	172	63%
U.N.	21	8%
Other Mideast political entities	26	14%
Other Political entities	40	16%

Table 5: Entities mentioned in news stories versus briefs

Story type	Israel	Palestinians	U.S.	U.N.	Mideast Political entities
News stories	98%	91%	73%	9%	9%
Briefs	86%	66%	20%	2%	25%

Table 6: Frames appearing in the 280 articles

Frame	n	% (Will not equal 100%)
Peace Process	131	48%
Israel's Security	88	32%
Palestinian Terrorism	81	30%
Palestinian Independence	44	16%
Israeli Fundamentalism	27	10%

Table 7: Headlines for photos/graphics by country

First Photo Headline	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total count
Israeli	11 (20%)	33 (61%)	10 (20%)	54 (100%)
Palestinian	8 (19%)	23 (54%)	12 (28%)	43 (100%)

Table 8: Photo/graphic captions by country

First Photo Caption	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total count
Israel	12 (20%)	36 (60%)	12 (20%)	60 (100%)
Palestinians	13 (24%)	21 (39%)	20 (37%)	54 (100%)

Table 9: Sources in 82 AP articles

Political entity	Articles in which a source from this entity was not present	Total times a source from this entity was used
Israel	16 (20%)	207
Palestinians	21 (26%)	151
U.S.	48 (59%)	51
Mideast	78 (95%)	6
U.N.	79 (96%)	6
Other political entities	74 (91%)	8

Table 10: General reading of the AP stories

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mixed
Israel	9 (12%)	25 (33%)	35 (46%)	7 (9%)
Palestinians	7 (10%)	32 (47%)	24 (35%)	6 (7%)
Other Mideast political entity	2 (2%)	5 (6%)	8 (10%)	1 (6%)
U.S.	7 (17%)	31 (74%)	4 (10%)	
U.N.		3 (100%)		

Table 11: Source of 82 Inquirer/Knight-Ridder stories

Political entity	Articles in which a source from this entity was not present	Total times a source from this entity was used
Israel	9 (11%)	294
Palestinians	30 (36%)	126
U.S.	39 (46%)	145
Mideast	74 (88%)	23
U.N.	77 (92%)	11
Other political entities	73 (88%)	16

Table 12: General reading of Inquirer/Knight-Ridder stories

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mixed
Israel	21 (27%)	32 (41%)	19 (23%)	4 (5%)
Palestinians	12 (18%)	31 (47%)	21 (32%)	1 (2%)
Other Mideast Political entity	4 (19%)	11 (52%)	6 (29%)	
U.S.	20 (46%)	20 (46%)	4 (9%)	
U.N.	1 (14%)	6 (86%)		

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[1] Robert L. Stevenson and Mark T. Greene. A reconsideration of bias in the news. Journalism Quarterly, 1980, 57, 115-21.
[2] Todd F. Simon, Frederick Fico and Stephen Lacy. Covering conflict and controversy: Measuring balance, fairness, defamation. Journalism Quarterly, 1989, 66(2), 427-434. Stephen Lacy, Frederick Fico and Todd F. Simon. Fairness and balance in the presige press. Journalism Quarterly, 1991, 68, 363-370. Frederick Fico, Linlin Ku and Stan Soffin. Fairness, balance of newspaper coverage of U.S. in Gulf war. Newspaper Research Journal, 1994, 15(1), 30-41.
[3] Donna Rouner, Michael D. Slater and Judith M. Buddenbaum. How perceptions of news bias in news sources relate to beliefs about media bias. Newspaper Research Journal, 1999, 20(2), 41.
[4] See Rouner et al., 1999.
[5] For instance, Douglas M. McLeod and Benjamin H. Detenber. Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest. Journal of Communication, 1999, 49(3), 3-23.
[6] For instance, Abhinav Aima. The Framing of Saddam Hussein: U.S. Foreign Policy and Coverage of Iraq in *Time* Magazine,1979-1998. Paper Presented to 1999 AEJMC annual convention, New Orleans, LA.

Computer-Assisted Reporting in Michigan Daily Newspapers:

More than a Decade of Adoption

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Computer-Assisted Reporting in Michigan Daily Newspapers:

More than a Decade of Adoption

-Abstract-

This study is a follow-up to previous studies, conducted in 1986 and 1994, and surveys all Michigan daily newspapers on their adoption and use of seven different computerized information sources. It also acts as a part of a longitudinal study on the adoption rate of computer-assisted reporting.

Particularly important findings are that 47 of the 48 state dailies now use one or more computerized sources to obtain information for news stories. The average number of such sources used by Michigan newspapers was about 4.5.

by

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Computer-Assisted Reporting in Michigan Daily Newspapers:

More than a Decade of Adoption

The computer-assisted reporting revolution may now be more of an evolution as computers are more routinely used for gathering and processing information. Indeed, the term, "computer-assisted reporting," may no longer be relevant as reporters use computers for gathering information on a regular basis as part of their writing and reporting process.

Computers are now used in every phase of the information production process--gathering, organizing, writing, presenting, producing and disseminating information to consumers. "Computer-assisted reporting" in the first phase, gathering information, is the focus of this study on rate of adoption.

This research is a follow-up to two Michigan daily newspaper studies. Initial research by Soffin et al. in 1986, tracked commercial online database and in-house electronic morgue use.[14] A second study by Davenport et al. in 1996, noted seven specific means by which computers were used for gathering and organizing information: 1) commercial online databases, 2) electronic bulletin board services (BBS's), 3) the Internet, 4) compact disks-read only memory (CD-ROMs), 5) electronic morgues of that newspaper's past issues 6) in-house topical databases that journalists develop and 7) the analyses of electronic public records.[15]

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[14] Stan Soffin et al., "Online Databases and Newspapers: An Assessment of Utilization and Attitudes," Paper Presented to Newspaper Division of AEJMC, August 1987. Data was gathered in 1986.

This study tracks when newspapers of different circulation size adopted each of these computerized sources and tracks the organizational benefits they obtained. Furthermore, the study explores how frequently different journalistic personnel use the various computerized sources, and for what newsgathering purpose.

Thus, the overall objective of the present study is three-fold. First, it is a longitudinal study that follows up on previous research to track newspapers' adoption of computerized information sources. Second, it updates what computer-assisted reporting methods journalists use as they gather information. Third, this study seeks current reasons why journalists use these different electronic sources.

This present study is unique because it replicates and updates the only other study that has traced the adoption of computerized information sources over time by a census of newspapers in a single state. In addition, this study follows the method of the previous research, breaking apart the term "computer-assisted reporting" into seven areas, making it a more exacting and comprehensive study. Other studies, national in scope, have not surveyed smaller—more typical--daily newspapers to find out the degree to which they have kept up or been left behind in computerized reporting. And, finally, a review of the literature shows no recent computer-assisted reporting research, even as widespread commentary suggests that newsrooms are being transformed by the "electronic revolution."

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[15] Lucinda Davenport, Frederick Fico and David Weinstock, "Computers in Newsrooms of Michigan's Newspapers," in Newspaper Research Journal, Vol. 17, No. 3-4, pp. 14-28 (Summer/Fall 1996). Data was gathered in 1994.

This recent neglect in the field is disconcerting when the types and combinations of computer-assisted reporting skills and their rates of adoption are issues for news professionals, who are trying to balance economics and competition. These points are also important to journalism educators who are trying to keep abreast of the industry while balancing new technology budgets, finding computer-assisted reporting instructors and squeezing more information into already content-jammed disciplines.

Background

The first adoption study on computerized information sources in Michigan was presented in 1987.[16] The second study was published in 1996.[17] No new adoption studies on computer-assisted reporting published since 1996 could be found.

The 1996 study reviewed the history of computer-assisted reporting and research initiatives. Generally, newspapers began implementing computers into their newsrooms in the 1980s. Commercial online databases such as VU/TEXT, CompuServe and The

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[16] Soffin et al., 1987.

[17] Davenport, Fico and Weinstock, 1996.

Source were used sporadically, depending on the newspaper's resources.[18] Furthermore, because of cost, many newspaper librarians, not journalists, were doing the online searching.[19]

By the 1990s, reporters were doing something unlike what journalists had done before: They were experimenting with statistics and database manager software to analyze public records. Reporters using online databases and analyzing government data consistently won Pulitzers for their in-depth reporting.

By then, computers were used for a variety of reporting reasons. Ward and Hansen coined the term, "computer-assisted reporting" to include the use of computers for creating and analyzing data.[20] DeFleur and Davenport defined computer-assisted reporting to encompass searching for information online in a variety of ways, analyzing public agency records and building customized databases.[21]

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[18] John Ullmann, "Large Newspaper Use of Commercial Data Bases," IDEAS: Research You can Use from the Missouri School of Journalism, 1:11-20, (1983); Tim Miller, "Information, Please, and Fast: Reporting's Revolution-Databases," Washington Journalism Review, September 1983, p.51-53; Lanny McDonald, "Commercial Database Survey," Bulletin of the Newspaper Division of the Special Libraries Association, Summer 1984, p.14; Endres, Frederick F. (1985) "Daily Newspaper Utilization of Computer Data Bases," Newspaper Research Journal, 7:29-35 (Fall, 1985); Tim Miller, "The Data-Base Revolution," Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 1988, p.35-38; John Kerr and Walter E. Niebauer, "Use of Full Text, Database Retrieval Systems by Editorial Page Writers," Newspaper Research Journal, 3:21-32 (Spring 1987); Stan Soffin et al., "Online Databases and Newspapers: An Assessment of Utilization and Attitudes," Paper Presented to Newspaper Division of AEJMC, August 1987; Kathleen A. Hansen et al., "Role of the Newspaper Library in the Production of News," Journalism Quarterly, 64:714-720 (Winter 1987); Kathleen A. Hansen et al., "Effects of the Electronic Library on News Reporting Protocols," Journalism Quarterly, 65:845-852 (Winter 1988); Thomas L. Jacobson and John Ullman, "Commercial Databases and Reporting: Opinions of Newspaper Journalists and Librarians," Newspaper Research Journal, 10:15-25 (Winter 1989).

[19] D.P. Wolfe, "Newspaper Use of Computer Databases and Guidelines for Access: A Case Study: The St. Petersburg Times," Unpublished master's thesis, University of South Florida, Tampa, 1989; Cynthia De Riemer, "Commercial Database Use in the Newsroom," Unpublished paper, March 1991 (later published version is "A Survey of Vu/Text Use in the Newsroom," Journalism Quarterly, 69:960-970 (Winter 1992); Jean Ward and Kathleen A. Hansen, "Journalist and Librarian Roles, Information Technologies and Newsmaking," Journalism Quarterly, 68:491-498 (Fall 1991).

[20] Ward and Hansen, 1991, p. 496.

Some journalists used the term, "computer-assisted reporting" to mean using a computer to search information online, while others intended it to mean using a computer to analyze government data. Researchers also used the term inconsistently for their research purposes. This confusion made comparisons of adoption rather difficult.[22]

Davenport et al. identified seven distinct ways in which computers were used to gather information for news stories. Each method requires special hardware and software, various costs and information-gathering skills. Ideally, journalists should be skilled in obtaining all types of computerized information. This study presents a short account of each computerized information source, which has been the subject of one or more research articles:

Commercial online databases have been the foundation of computer-assisted reporting research since the 1970s, and are defined as " a collection of data or body of information that is organized for rapid retrieval via a computer."[23] Commercial online services can be thought of as a collection of individual databases that can be searched simultaneously for updated information, and usually for a price. Newsroom librarians often search the more expensive services, such as Lexis/Nexis, Dow Jones News Retrieval and Dialog. Journalists more often use the less expensive ones, such as CompuServe and America Online, which also act as a gateway to the Internet.

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[21] Margaret H. DeFleur and Lucinda D. Davenport, "Computer-Assisted Journalism in Newsrooms vs Classrooms: A Study in Innovation Lag," Journalism Educator, 1993.

[22] Cecilia Friend, "Daily Newspaper Use of Computers to Analyze Data," Newspaper Research Journal, Vol.15, No.1, pp.63-71 (Winter 1994); Brian S. Brooks and Yai-en Yang, "Patterns of Computer Use in Newspaper Newsrooms: A National Study of U.S. Dailies," Paper Presented to the Newspaper Division, AEJMC, Kansas, Missouri, August 1993; Bruce Garrison, "Computer-Assisted Reporting at U.S. Daily Newspapers, 1994 Study," Presented to Society of Professional Journalists, Nashville, Tennessee, October 1994; Dave Mayes, "Survey Finds Texas Newspapers Gearing Up to Move Onto Information Superhighway," Sent by Kathleen Davis as Internet message, Article from "Getting on the Information Superhighway in the Newsroom: A Survey of Texas Newspapers," Sponsored by the Texas Daily Newspaper Association, Texas Press Association, Texas A&M University's Department of Agricultural Communications, and Texas A&M Public Policy Resources Institute, Nov. 1994.

Local or national electronic bulletin boards (BBS's) store a topical database and enabled individuals to interact with other users. Journalists frequently used government BBS's to find information or leave messages for experts.

Internet use surged when Gopher was developed in 1991 and exploded when the World Wide Web was born in 1993. Since then, many database producers formerly on commercial online services and owners of BBS's have moved their content to the Internet, where volume is said to double every 90 days.[24] Journalists use websites with select databases, mailing lists and newsgroups to find people and information.

CD-ROMs are composed of individual databases that contain bibliographic citations and abstracts, articles and transcripts, books and directories, government documents, public records and consumer records, photos and graphics. CD-ROMs can be searched often without incurring online expenses, are easy to use and store. Their information is usually updated periodically by stamping out a new CD-ROM.

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[23] Nora M. Paul, Computer-Assisted Research: A Guide to Tapping Online Information (4th ed.) Chicago: Bonus Books and the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1999.

An electronic morgue of the newspaper's past issues usually is available in-house to all journalists on their computers. Reporters can find electronic articles published in previous issues of the newspaper by typing in a keyword into the electronic database. The morgue is often different in procedure and format from the online archive that consumers use when accessing an online "newspaper."

In-house topical databases that journalists develop are most useful for preserving and adding to information annually to identify trends, such as local campaign contributions. Journalists analyze and organize this numerical or character data in spreadsheets and database management programs.

Electronic public records usually are obtained with a FIOA to government departments. Some records are available on a government agency's website. Journalists use spreadsheets and database managers to assist them in their government watchdog role.

The Present Study

No studies on newspapers' uses of computerized information have been systematically longitudinal. As DeFleur and Davenport indicated, the quantitative pattern

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[24] Nua, Ltd., NUA Internet Surveys, composed of information originally found at a now-nonexistent file in Yahoo.com/headlines.

of computer-assisted reporting adopted in newsrooms can only be inferred because of the limited number of studies reporting the use of online databases around the country.

The objective of this study is to follow up on two state studies, showing the rate of adoption of computerized information sources used by daily newspapers.

The initial study in 1986, by Soffin et al., found that only two of 51 state daily newspapers used a commercial online database. Four had some form of electronic morgue. More than 60 percent of the respondents thought online databases were not important, and many did not know what an online database was.

The 1994 study, by Davenport et al., was the first study in the country to ask about each of the seven components that make up computer-assisted reporting. They found in a telephone survey that 37 of the responding 46 daily newspapers used one or more of the computerized information sources (80 percent). Of those newspapers using at least one electronic source, only four (11 percent) used all seven sources. Eleven newspapers (30 percent) used just one of the sources. The most common sources used were newspaper-developed databases (68 percent), electronic public records (57 percent), CD-ROMs (51 percent) and commercial online databases (51 percent). Journalists used newspaper-developed databases and electronic public records mostly for finding raw data, CD-ROMs for general information and online databases for background statistics.

The present study gathers more information on the adoption rate of the seven computerized information sources. Comparison with the earlier study will illuminate trends or changes in how and why each computerized source is used. Results from the study will have value in tracking changes taking place in newsrooms. But more importantly, study results can help news organizations and journalism schools prioritize financial support and re-assess training needs.

Research Questions

This study seeks answers to the following questions about the seven types of computer-assisted information sources defined conceptually and explored empirically in previous research:

RQ1: What is the average number of such sources used by dailies, and what are the most frequent combinations?

RQ2: How is newspaper size related to use of such sources?

RQ3: When and for what organizational reasons did newspapers adopt such sources?

RQ4: For what journalistic reasons are such sources used, and how frequently are they used?

RQ5: How likely are reporters to use such sources?

RQ6: How have dailies changed during the last six years in the use of computerized information sources?

Method

This study replicates the methods used for the studies conducted in1986 and in 1994. In Phase One, researchers called each daily newspaper in Michigan and spoke to an appropriate editor who could provide information about the computerized information sources the newspaper used. The editor was asked if the newspaper used one or more of the seven electronic information sources. The seven sources were commercial online databases, bulletin board systems (BBS's), the Internet, CD-ROMS, an electronic morgue, newspaper-developed databases and electronic public records.

If the newspaper used one or more of the computerized sources, then the editor was sent a Phase Two mail survey probing for more information.[25] The one-page questionnaire (a single page focused on a particular source) asked when the newspaper acquired the source, why the newspaper decided to adopt it, the journalistic reasons for using the source and who uses the source. The consistency of the questions helped standardize comparisons of the three studies to gauge rate of adoption.

Results

Forty-eight Michigan dailies listed in *Editor & Publisher International Directory* for 1999 were contacted by telephone and asked about their use of the seven electronic information sources. Forty-seven reported using at least one of the seven sources. Twenty-five of those 47 newspapers (53 percent) subsequently provided additional information on how they use these information sources.

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[25] A follow-up mail survey was used for several reasons. First, the researchers wanted to give editors an opportunity to find information that they might not have access to while on the phone. Second, if newspapers used several information sources, interview time may have exceeded what is generally considered acceptable. Third, the researchers were confident that respondents would be interested enough in the study to be willing to respond with more detail at a later time. Phase Two consisted of three mailings.

RQ1: What is the average number of such sources used by dailies, and what are the most frequent combinations?

The average number of such sources used by Michigan newspapers was about 4.5, thereby answering Research Question 1 (See Table 1). In fact, 47 percent of the 47 newspapers reported using at least five of the sources, and 21 percent used all seven of the sources probed.

Table 1 indicates that use of the Internet is now virtually universal among Michigan dailies, with more than nine in 10 newspapers reporting their use. CD-ROMs, public records and bulletin board services are used by about two-thirds to three-quarters of the dailies. Online databases and electronic morgues are used by at least half of the newspapers.

RQ2: How is newspaper size related to use of such sources?

Circulation size correlated .48 with the number of such sources adopted by these newspapers. But newspapers of all sizes were using one or more of the sources. Table 2 indicates that nearly every larger circulation newspaper—those over 50,000—have adopted each of the sources. However, the smallest dailies—those under 10,000 circulation—were less likely to adopt the sources. Overall, circulation size was consistently associated with the adoption of the Internet, online databases and electronic morgues. In general, newspapers under 25, 000 circulation were less likely to use newspaper-developed databases, and newspapers under 10,000 were also less likely to use electronic morgues, electronic public records and online databases.

Clearly, newspapers are focusing on electronic information resources that yield a maximum return for a minimum investment. Those computerized sources that are the least expensive and require less expertise were adopted the most: the Internet and CD-ROMs. Those sources requiring ongoing newspaper maintenance and commitment were adopted least: electronic morgues and newspaper-developed databases. The other sources require varying costs and expertise, depending on the type and frequency of information acquired. For example, some public records may be inexpensive to obtain, but require expertise in statistics and database management programs. Online databases differ in fees for startup, monthly subscription, number of searches, types of searches (amount of time online) and document retrieval.

RQ3: When and for what organizational reasons did newspapers adopt such sources?

Nearly one quarter of the newspapers developed in-house topical databases and electronic morgues before1990, and about one-third began using CD-ROMs between 1990 and 1995. (See Table 3) Editors indicated that their newspaper adopted the other sources sometime after 1995: 32 percent jumped on the Internet in 1996, another quarter had newspaper-developed databases in 1997, and BBS's, online databases and electronic morgues were acquired mostly in 1998. In 1999 to early 2000, about one third of the newspapers began using CD-ROMs and public records, and a quarter of them used electronic morgues.

Management's main objective for acquiring every source was personnel efficiency. (See Table 4) With many of the computerized sources at hand, reporters can find a lot of updated information quickly. They do not spend as much time in a library or on the telephone, tracking down information and sources. Reporters write in-depth and meaningful stories more quickly with these sources than the traditional ones. Editors said that after efficiency, competition was a reason to obtain online databases. Affordability was a second reason to use the Internet and BBS's. Many editors noted they had various "other" reasons, such as storage and up-to-date information, for adopting sources. Certainly, encyclopedia CD-ROMs have more recent data and consume less shelf space than some 20 thick volumes.

RQ4: For what journalistic reasons are such sources used, and how frequently are these used?

Finding general information is the primary reason journalists use most of the sources (the Internet, 92 percent; online databases, 90 percent; CD-ROMs, 73 percent; and BBS's, 57 percent). (See Table 5) As expected, journalists use public records to analyze raw numbers (77 percent) and even more to find information about people—particular individuals, such as campaign contributors, and groupings of people, such as the demographics of a region (83 percent). They also develop their own databases

to examine numerical data (75 percent). Journalists us
general information, find facts about people and for a
percent each).

Journalists used most of the sources frequently
newspaper morgue (83 percent), the Internet (72 perce
and their newspaper databases (50 percent). They use
they used anually CD-ROMs (38 percent) and public r
Reasons for these responses may have to do with the t
logistics of the newsroom—how accessible informatio

RQ5: How likely are reporters to use such

In every case, each source was used mostly by
distantly by librarians. (See Table 7) All reporters (10
databases, public records and newspaper-developed da
BBS's (93 percent), electronic morgues (92 percent) a

RQ6: How have dailies changed during the
computerized information sources?

Newsroom techniques have changed greatly fr
online databases were not important. Fourteen years ag
newspapers used a commercial online database and fou

It is clear that dramatic changes also have occu
1994 study. In 1994, nearly one in five (9 of 46) of the

t). Journalists use their electronic morgue to gather
people and for a variety of "other" reasons (42

urces frequently. They connected daily to their
nternet (72 percent), online databases (60 percent)
cent). They used weekly BBS's (47 percent) and
ent) and public records (33 percent). (See Table 6)
to do with the type of story written and the
sible information sources are to journalists.

ers to use such sources?

used mostly by reporters, then by editors, then
ll reporters (100 percent) used the Internet, online
er-developed databases. Most reporters also used
es (92 percent) and CD-ROMs (75 percent).

ged during the last six years in the use of

nged greatly from the time most editors thought
ourteen years ago, only two of the state's 51 daily
database and four had an electronic morgue.
also have occurred among these dailies since the
(9 of 46) of the newspapers reported using none

of the sources, compared to only 2 percent of the dailies (1 of 48) asked in 2000. Nearly twice the newspapers in 2000 (21 percent) were using all seven sources compared to 1994 (11 percent). If newspapers used any of these sources at all, the average number of such sources used was 3.4 in 1994 compared to 4.5 in 2000.

In fact, different sources had very different rates of adoption across the time period studied. Internet adoption was explosive, doubling during the six-year period. (See Table 1) Use of CD-ROMs and online databases increased by more than 80 percent. Use of BBS's, electronic morgues and electronic public records increased by 60 to 75 percent. By contrast, newspaper-developed databases showed a 20-percent decline during the period.

Interestingly, two electronic information sources exchanged first and last places from 1994 to 2000. The Internet, nearly the least adopted computer source in 1994, was adopted by most of the newspapers in 2000. This result is not surprising. With Gopher's development in 1991 and the World Wide Web in 1993, interest in the Internet surged in 1994, the last year of the preceding study. In the following six years, the number of U.S. users of the Internet has grown to 20 million. Almost everyone knows something about the Internet, it requires relatively little expertise for someone to obtain information and it is the least expensive source (a cheap monthly flat fee or else free) of the studied seven electronic information sources.

On the other hand, use of newspaper-developed databases dropped from first to last place between the two periods. Six years ago, the concept of analyzing government records was new and exciting. However, government agencies often did not want to part with their records, and frequently gave data in paper stacks to reporters, who keyed in the numbers on their computers. Although the Freedom of Information Act was to guarantee open access to government records, the agencies would comply by offering that information in print documents, not electronic records. FOIA now includes electronic and digital information, and government agencies are more accustomed to reporters' requests for records. Furthermore, much of the government's data can be downloaded from the Internet and imported straight into a spreadsheet or database program; reporters no longer must key in the data themselves for many reporting projects, which may account for the drop in newspaper-developed databases, and a corresponding increase in use of electronic public records.

Editors in both studies said that personnel efficiency was the primary reason news organizations adopted each electronic information source. As management is surely aware, finding updated information and sources quickly using computerized sources may allow reporters to write two stories in the same time it took to write one using traditional methods.

Given that efficiency was the most often cited reason for adopting sources, it would be expected that these sources are used frequently in the newsroom. Online databases, electronic morgues and BBS's are still used daily to weekly. Internet and newspaper database use increased from monthly in 1994 to daily in 1999. CD-ROM use decreased from monthly in 1994 to yearly in 1999, and accessing public records remained a yearly project.

Journalists developed their own databases and used public records in both studies primarily for the same reason—to analyze raw data. Increasingly, by 1999 they used public records to also find out about people. They also searched CD-ROMs for the same purpose of finding general information. In 1994, journalists used online databases, the Internet and their electronic morgue mostly for background statistics, but in 1999, they used these same sources mostly for finding general information. Use of the electronic morgue expanded by 1999 to include finding out out about people and background information. Journalists turned to BBS's for context and finding sources in 1994 and for general information in 1999.

A variety of personnel used each source in both studies. Reporters were the most common user of all the sources in 1999, and of all but two sources in 1994. In 1994, personnel other than reporters—presumably librarians—were the most common users of CD-ROMs and online databases. Librarians were trained to efficiently search expensive online databases and were responsible for the CD-ROM discs, which could get lost if borrowed by others. In the early 1990s, many newspapers had one computer, located in the library, dedicated to reading CD-ROMs. Six years later, many reporters can access CD-ROMs remotely through their computers. They also have become more knowledgeable database searchers.

Several research terms and technology procedures should be considered when identifying changes in computer-assisted reporting because terms, definitions and processes have modified through the years. A future adoption study should more closely examine BBS, online database and Internet interconnections. Government and other BBS's were once housed in stand-alone computers, usually accessible by a single telephone line. A government-sponsored BBS was about the fastest and only electronic way for reporters to get general information from a government agency. Today, most topical BBS's are reached through the Internet, and still offer much interactivity among members—chat rooms, discussion groups, public and private e-mail. Government agencies, however, opt to put their information on websites without much of the interactive capabilities. Thus, a future study would need to find out if the BBS's the reporters use are the traditional dial-up BBS's or Internet ones. It is a certainty that reporters' use of BBS's will significantly decrease in the future as more information is offered online.

Similarly, much of the information once found only in online databases can be found on the Internet. Reporters formally used CompuServe and America Online for information found within those services' computers. These online services now often act as an Internet Service Provider (ISP), merely a gateway to the Internet. Here, again, a future study should examine closely how the online service is being used—traditionally for its databases or as an ISP.

A future study also needs to look past the traditional terms to the definitions and processes of electronic morgues and archives. Long ago, all newspaper articles were cut up and filed in manila folders stored in filing cabinets. Newspaper issues were bound together in books. Reporters looked in the morgue for information the newspaper had previously published about a person, event or issue. "Morgue" has been replaced in many newspapers with the preferred term, "archive." However, some newspapers have both an online morgue and an online archive. The morgue is a database of the newspaper stories that can be retrieved with dates and keywords, and is used only in-house--by the newspaper staff. A newspaper's archive is on the newspaper's website and stories can be retrieved by either the date or the keywords by the public, usually for a fee. The story appears on the monitor surrounded by ads or navigational buttons, as it appeared originally. Thus, a researcher should find out what reporters mean when they say they use a "morgue" or "archive." Are they no longer using the term, "morgue" but instead "archive," although the meanings are the same? Or, are these two different procedures for accessing two types of databases?

Implications and Conclusions

Newspapers are increasingly challenged by alternate information sources such as the Internet and the rise of specialty publications. Responding to this challenge to keep and gain readers, newspapers have used new marketing techniques and product technologies to better transmit their news and information. Zoned editions were created to capture additional geographic areas, while specialized sections attempted to capture niches of reader interest. More recently, newspapers have begun online publications as a means to broaden both their geographic reach and reader appeal.

But alongside this innovativeness in transmitting information has been innovation in gathering the news. Especially during the last decade, that too has largely been a revolution in the use of computer-related, electronic technologies. And, just as news products are changing shape, newsrooms are changing the way they operate, dramatically illustrated by the changes tracked in this study. While the Internet is expanding throughout U.S. homes, it has already arrived in newsrooms in Michigan and no doubt throughout the nation. Other technologies are enabling reporters and editors to vastly expand the potential pool of sources, to gather background information on issues and people, and to analyze data in the "firehouse research" manner envisioned by journalist Philip Meyer more than 20 years ago in his book, *Precision Journalism.*[26]

That revolution in electronic news gathering is now being carried almost entirely by the reporting staff. As this study shows, reporters in increasingly more newsrooms have learned to use the Internet, online databases, CD-ROMs and BBS's. Furthermore, reporters are routinely accessing and analyzing data from such sources as electronic public records and newspaper-developed databases. The result has been a capability to report more broadly and deeply about the community and the nation than has ever existed before. Such a capability, of course, may not be reflected in the journalistic product. News organization managers and editors, after all, must make the decision on how to deploy newsroom resources of time and talent. But that capability is still unprecedented in America's daily journalism.

For years, many mass media experts have accepted how Walter Lippmann in *Public Opinion*[27], written during the last century, characterized American journalism: a restless searchlight probing the darkness, occasionally illuminating some object of interest but unable to provide the meaning and context needed by democracy. Lippmann thought then that journalism could function best in a derivative role: by reporting the findings of what he called the "fact gathering" institutions of government. Today, American journalism is increasingly acquiring its own capability to be the kind of institution Lippmann had in mind, one that can hold up a more faithful reflection of who we are and what we are about.

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[26] Philip Meyer, Precision Journalism: A Reporter's Guide to Social Science Methods, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

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[27] Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion, New York: Macmillan, 1961. (First edition in 1922).

TABLE 1

Most Frequently Used Electronic Information Sources

	2000	1994	Increase/Decrease
Internet	96%	41%	200%
CD-ROMs	75%	51%	84%
Public Records	72%	57%	62%
BBS's	64%	46%	76%
Online Databases	55%	51%	89%
Electronic Morgues	51%	35%	71%
Newspaper Databases	43%	68%	-20%
N	47	37	

TABLE 2

Circulation Size
and Use of Electronic Information Sources

(Circulation in thousands)	<10	10-25	25-50	over 50
Internet	88%	100%	100%	100%
CD-ROMs	82%	57%	67%	90%
Public Records	41%	93%	83%	90%
BBS's	58%	50%	83%	80%
Online Databases	41%	50%	50%	90%
Electronic Morgues	18%	57%	67%	70%
Newspaper Databases	18%	36%	83%	70%
N	17	14	6	10

TABLE 3

Year Newspaper Began Using An Electronic Information Source*

	Internet	CD-ROMs	Public Records	BBS's	Online Databases	Electr. Morgue	Newspaper Databases
Before 1990	0	0	6%	0	0	25%	25%
Before 1995	4%	29%	6%	14%	11%	8%	13%
1995	8%	0	6%	7%	11%	0	13%
1996	32%	7%	12%	14%	22%	8%	13%
1997	28%	14%	18%	14%	0	8%	25%
1998	20%	21%	24%	43%	33%	25%	0
1999-2000	8%	29%	29%	7%	22%	25%	13%
N	25	14	17	14	9	12	8

* Underlined percent is when most newspapers adopted this particular source.

TABLE 4

News Organizations' Reasons for Adopting Electronic Information Source*

	Internet	CD-ROMs	Public Records	BBS's	Online Databases	Electr. Morgue	Newspaper Databases
Competition	44%	27%	17%	20%	60%	8%	38%
Efficiency	88%	73%	83%	73%	80%	100%	63%
Affordability	48%	27%	28%	27%	40%	25%	25%
Other	32%	33%	44%	13%	40%	33%	50%
N	22	15	18	15	10	12	8

* Editors could identify more than one reason for adopting a particular source. Underlined percent is the most commonly cited reason for adopting a particular source.

TABLE 5

Journalistic Reasons for Using Electronic Information Sources*

	Internet	CD-ROMs	Public Records	BBS's	Online Databases	Electr. Morgue	Newspaper Databases
Background	80%	27%	67%	50%	60%	42%	50%
Raw Numbers	52%	47%	77%	36%	40%	0	75%
General	92%	73%	39%	57%	90%	42%	13%
People Info.	64%	33%	83%	36%	50%	42%	50%
Localization	76%	27%	44%	36%	60%	33%	50%
Interviews	60%	13%	22%	43%	50%	25%	25%
Other	24%	31%	0	14%	40%	42%	0
N	22	15	18	14	10	12	8

* Editors could identify multiple reasons for using a particular source. Underlined percent is the most commonly cited reason for using a source.

TABLE 6

Frequency of Use of Electronic Sources*

	Internet	CD-ROMs	Public Records	BBS's	Online Databases	Electr. Morgue	Newspaper Databases
Daily	72%	25%	17%	27%	60%	83%	50%
Weekly	20%	25%	22%	47%	20%	8%	13%
Monthly	8%	13%	28%	7%	20%	8%	0
Yearly	0%	38%	33%	20%	0	0	38%
N	25	16	18	15	10	12	8

* Underline percent is the most commonly cited frequency of use of a particular source.

TABLE 7

News Personnel Who Use Electronic Information Sources*

	Internet	CD-ROMs	Public Records	BBS's	Online Databases	Electr. Morgue	Newspaper Databases
Reporters	100%	75%	100%	93%	100%	92%	100%
Editors	92%	69%	56%	73%	70%	92%	75%
Librarians	28%	19%	6%	7%	10%	50%	0
Others	16%	20%	0	14%	0	42%	0
N	22	16	18	15	10	12	8

* Editors could identify multiple users of a particular source. Underline percent is the most commonly cited user of a particular source.

Newspaper

WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPS

A comparison of local, regional and national newspaper coverage of 1990s school shootings

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Research has indicated that media in smaller communities cover events in their community differently than regional or national media, suggesting that the size of the community plays a role in how news events are covered. Breed (1958) asserted that newspapers in smaller communities are less likely to report on controversy in public affairs, and may omit or bury items which might jeopardize the socio-cultural structure and man's faith in it. Breed posited that a "chamber of commerce attitude" prevails, in which the newspapers try to portray the community's positive attributes. Olien, Donohue and Tichenor (1968) found that newspapers in larger communities were more likely to report on conflict than newspapers in smaller communities. The reason, they claimed, was that smaller communities have fewer mechanisms for protecting the social order against the total disruption that might result from uncontrolled public dispute, and the community may look to the press as an instrument for tension management. Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1972) claimed that the community press frequently reported the positive side of civic affairs and were more likely to stress community stability. Donohue, Olien and Tichenor (1992) claimed that media in larger more pluralistic communities, places with more formal channels for dealing with conflict, were more likely to report conflict in public life. They found less reporting of conflict in smaller, more homogenous communities, in part because residents frequently had face-to-face contacts with each other. Further, they claimed a "guard dog" press protected community power systems, including government institutions, from outside threats and would sacrifice deviant individuals to protect the system.

Most of this research concentrated on reporting of local government and other public affairs, the types of stories that would generate little interest outside that community. For example, a typical city council meeting in a small town may be of great interest to local media, of minimal interest to regional media and no interest to national media. These types of stories fit within what Gans (1979) calls the routine activities of public officials. (p. 52-64) Perhaps a better assessment of differences could be found in the second type of news outlined by Gans, disorder news, especially analyzing events that small-town, regional and national media would all cover. Of particular interest is coverage of widely newsworthy events that took place in a small town, as it would explore the "chamber of commerce" Breed mentioned and explore whether small-town media would be more likely to promote community cohesion, such as by minimizing conflict.

A series of school shootings in small towns during the 1990s presented a prime opportunity to examine differences in the ways those stories were covered, or framed, by journalists. This study examines differences in news frames among national, regional and local newspapers during five school shootings in the late 1990s. Due to the nature of the shootings, those incidents can be considered local conflicts and challenges to community cohesion. Children murdering children in a public school may be of widespread interest. Nationally, those interests may not only include what happened, but why and potential causes. A regional community may need some specifics about what happened and who was involved. The local community may need details of what happened and information it needs to recover from the traumatic event.

Variability is expected due to differences in the nature, roles and practices of newspapers in their communities. These differences may be explained by the audience and community needs of serving different types of readers, and/or by the organizational pressures embedded in the news-gathering process.

Audience and community needs

Newspaper coverage, except for the work of Donohue, Olien and Tichenor mentioned previously, has typically been studied as a monolithic phenomenon, in which the behavior of elite media came to represent behavior of media in general. Shaw and Sparrow (1999), examing that single-actor approach of the media in political coverage, found differences in the coverage patterns between inner-ring newspapers, including *The*

New York Times, Washington Post and *Los Angeles Times*, and middle or outer-ring newspapers. While national, regional and local newspapers all contribute information, interpretation and entertainment to their readers, each has specific needs of readers and the communities they cover to take into account. Fuller (1996) claims that every newspaper is provincial, and to survive, it must reflect the needs of a specific audience. (p. 9) Those needs may be reflected in a bias toward coverage of news that happens close to the audience's community needs and interests. Those communities are not necessarily defined geographically, but can be bound by specific interests. A successful newspaper, according to Fuller (p. 92), must reflect its time and place. Thus, different communities of interest should be reflected in differences in emphasis in coverage of events like school shootings.

A national newspaper, such as *The New York Times*, has a specialized audience and is edited to satisfy that typically national audience. In the school shootings, the societal implications may become critical and trends may be emphasized, all to explain why it matters to a national audience.

Local newspapers, serving a community primarily of people who live near the shooting scene, may serve that community need primarily with an emphasis on information, with a secondary emphasis on topics that encourage community cohesion and healing, and limited mention of topics that could further harm the community's collective emotional state. A local newspaper covering a tragic event in its small community may pay less attention to depicting the event as a societal trend, for such an approach could hurt community cohesion by highlighting a shortcoming in the community structure. Instead, a local newspaper covering such an event may be more likely to depict individuals as deviant, as blaming the event on a societal trend would call into question the community itself.

Regional newspapers may be a hybrid of patterns expected in national and local newspapers, as it may have two distinct audiences. One audience includes those directly affected if the story happened in their hometown, perhaps involving friends, neighbors or family. For those readers, the regional newspaper may be an important source of information, including what happened and where, to which specific people or place, and what happens next. The other, broader audience may have interests closer to that of the national audience. This community may have less interested in specific information and more interest in interpretation and assessment of trends to serve these readers.

Organizational pressures

Reporters from national, regional and local newspapers may share the traditional, underlying value of good journalism, objectivity, a traditional means of balancing a story. But that doesn't explain how journalists sharing the same values would cover an event in different ways. Gans (1979, p. 39-40) and Graber (1993, p. 21) place the news-making process into four models. The mirror model asserts that news is a reflection of reality, that reporters observe the world and report what they see, as accurately and objectively as possible. The professional model claims that journalism is the endeavor of highly skilled professionals who put together an interesting collage of events selected for importance, attractiveness to media audiences and balance among various elements of the news offering. The political model asserts that news is a product of the ideological biases of individual news people, as well as of the pressures of the political and economic environment in which the news organization operates. The organizational model claims that news selection emerges from the pressures inherent in organizational processes and goals, including interpersonal relationships, professional norms, and technical, economic and legal constraints.

The organizational model provides insight for understanding the differences in news frames among the local, national and regional newspaper journalists in covering the school shootings. Organizational theories emphasize that the sheer bureaucracy of news organizations constricts news judgment. Newsrooms have the principal attributes of a bureaucracy: a division of labor (editors, general assignment reporters, beat reporters), with specific substantive area (economics, sports, society, arts). Sigal (1973, p. 4) suggests that the division of labor within news organizations creates conflicts, with journalists in one position viewing the world from a different perspective than others within the organization. Thus, conflicts often arise between reporters and editors, between reporters and between editors, the types of jurisdictional disputes built into many large organizations. Such conflicts can have important consequences for news content. For example, editors in a distant home office may dictate story emphasis to reporters in the field.

Conflicts are part of the beat system, a division of labor that is perhaps the most important organizational structure in understanding news values. Beats offer a ready source of fresh information for reporters, but are also an ongoing tug-of-war between reporters and sources, a symbiotic relationship in which the two parties are forced to work together. Bargaining, notes Sigal, (p. 4) is continuously part of the relationship and can affect what information sources pass on to reporters.

Among the most common newspaper beats are those devoted to crime coverage. To be effective, reporters forge a working relationship with the law enforcement sources, and a two-way trust may develop when reporters and police sources know each other and what to expect. Thus, reporters with an existing relationship, such as those from local newspapers in a school shooting, would have an edge in access to law enforcement sources over competing media. It may also mean local reporters would be more likely to follow the lead of their sources in framing a school shooting as primarily a crime story. In essence, the reporters may somewhat become spokesmen for their news sources rather than dispassionate observers. (Sigal, p. 9) They may become dependent on their regular sources (Sigal, p. 54) and less likely to publish information that could harm that relationship.

By contrast, reporters from outside the area visiting a school shooting scene are not bound by the source sensitivities that the local reporters have to honor, as they are not as likely to be concerned with future access. Since they don't have a two-way trust or a previous working arrangement with those sources, visiting journalists may be less likely to frame the story from the perspective of the local officials. When such outside reporters are sent to cover a small-town story, said Gans (p. 141) "they can ignore local rules which obligate local reporters to minimize the disorder, either to prevent it from escalating or to preserve the positive image of the community."

Journalists at smaller newspapers, like the local papers, may have different views about their roles than colleagues at larger newspapers. Much of that may be tied to their perception of where they fit within the smaller communities where the school shooting took place. Editors at small-town newspapers are much more likely to identify with the community and work to protect the community's image than editors or journalists at larger newspapers. (Qualter, 1989, p. 142) They look for consensus and avoid conflict (Edelstein and Contris, 1966). Such tendencies may cause those journalists to frame stories, such as the school shootings, as being caused by deviant individuals, rather than as part of a broader cultural problem. Such a societal approach may be seen as questioning the community's values.

Rewards and motivations may differ as well. Small-town journalists are more likely to reflect community values, and more likely to be rewarded by their community contacts, such as praise in casual conversations with local residents at the grocery store. Writing stories that upset the public can have immediate and personal consequences, from subtle snubs to outright hostility from friends and neighbors. In contrast, journalists from regional and national newspapers have infrequent contacts with their readers and rarely would encounter small-town residents affected by their stories. Regular contacts for these journalists are primarily co-workers, sources, friends and families. Their rewards come within an occupational culture, in which they identify with other journalists and value competition, aggressive reporting and recognition within the industry. The competition comes both from outside (television, radio and other newspapers) and inside (with co-workers for prominent play of stories). Investigative reporting, winning the Pulitzer Prize and autonomy of control rank high (Viall, 1992).

Logistics play a role in coverage, both in the proximity of the newspapers to the event scene and size of staff, making it difficult to cover the event as a local story. Visiting reporters not only have to deal with the technical problems of working on the road, but also have to quickly become acquainted with the town, who to speak with and how to find them. The small staffs of local newspapers mean they can't cover all of the angles that the larger papers can cover, which may mean a concentration on the law enforcement aspects of the crime. Meanwhile, the national and regional newspapers, with larger staffs, can look at a variety of issues, including the use of reporters in the home office to examine the cultural implications of the crime.

Problem

Students were gathered around tables in the cafeteria of Thurston High School before classes started one morning in May 1998 when Kipland Phillip Kinkel strolled in. The 15-year-old freshman had been suspended from the Springfield, Oregon, school a day earlier for bringing a stolen handgun to campus. Now the boy was armed with three guns. Taking aim with a semiautomatic rifle, Kinkel began spraying gunfire around the crowded cafeteria. The carnage: Two dead and 22 wounded. As Kinkel paused to reload, five students tackled and subdued him. Authorities later found Kinkel's mother and father shot to death in the family home, two more victims of the boy's rampage.

The school shooting was disturbingly familiar to Americans in the late 1990s. The Springfield shooting was one of three school shootings that day and the 17th school shooting in 28 months. All but one of the 12 violent school-associated deaths with multiple victims between 1992 and 1998 occurred in cities with a population fewer than 80,000, and nine of the 12 were in communities with population 52,000 or fewer, according to a preliminary report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **(1)**

Two more school shootings in smaller communities occurred in the spring of 1999, the deadliest yet, with 15 killed, in Littleton, Colorado. And the media response was familiar as well: Local and national television crews focusing their cameras on distraught students, newspapers trying to probe how this could happen and how it could be prevented.

The topic of school shootings reverberates with the American public. In response to the April 1999 Littleton shooting, a Gallup telephone poll of 1,073 adults found 55 percent had favorable opinions of media coverage and close to an even split whether the media coverage was about right or too much. **(2)** A further indicator of national interest in the school shootings was registered in newspaper coverage around the nation. A Lexis-Nexis search of six major U.S. newspapers, using the same incidents as in this study, showed growing attention to the school shootings. **(3)**

This study examines differences in story type, emphasis and frequency among local, regional and national newspapers covering school shootings. It examines how differences in audience and community needs, and organizational pressures contributed to different types of newspapers framing the school shooting stories in different ways. Looking at the coverage patterns of the local, regional and national newspapers covering the emotions and dramas of the school shootings offer insight to how such media operate under pressure of a traumatic event.

This study examines media frames as a dependent variable, putting the emphasis on factors that influence the newspapers and result in certain frames.

Framing

Framing is the ways in which the media (in this study, newspapers) consciously or unconsciously present themes within the text of articles. According to Gitlin (1980, p. 7), frames act as central organizing ideas that "enable journalists to process large amounts of information quick [and to] package the information for efficient relay to their audiences." Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143) see a frame is a "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning." Thus, examining frames is an effective way to discover which aspects of news reality journalists deem most newsworthy. These frames may be found through analysis of text, such as through the presence or absence of key words or phrases, and the choice of sources of information.

Potential frames

Review of literature identified differences that might be expected in how local, regional and national newspapers would cover events like school shootings. It's anticipated that content analysis will show local and national newspapers to differ greatly in the frames they select for emphasis. Three potential frames are expected: societal frame, crime and suspect frame, and tension management frame.

Societal frame. National newspapers are expected to employ a societal frame, which emphasizes the societal implications of the school shooting. That frame includes potential reasons why the shooting occurred, the social causes and solutions. Local newspapers are expected to avoid societal frames, such as potential causes, blame and solutions, which could target the community's institutions as part of the problem and threaten community cohesion.

Crime and suspect frame. Local newspapers are expected to focus on the crime aspects of the school shooting, rather than societal implications. This crime frame may focus primarily on suspects, the deviant individuals involved in the shooting. A secondary focus of local newspapers may be on victims, especially depicting them in humanizing terms, emphasizing the good and positive sides of their character.

Tension management frame. Local newspapers respond to the community's needs in an emotionally trying time by emphasizing a tension management frame. This frame would be typified by providing extensive information to make the community aware of the details of what happened. The frame would appear in articles depicting ways for the community to cope with the tragedy, which helps reinforce community stability.

Hypotheses

The local newspaper may recognize the needs of the community for facts about the school shooting by providing a great deal of information in its news coverage, part of the anticipated tension management frame. This information would be presented in a variety of stories covering conceivably every angle that the journalists could compile within the limits of news space and time. The story would undoubtedly be the most important news event in the small town at the time, thus any stories about events surrounding the shooting would be run in prominent places, especially on Page 1. This description fits the community and audience needs theory mentioned previously.

H1: In number of stories and prominent placement of stories, the local newspapers will have the most coverage and most prominent placement, while the national newspaper will have the least coverage and least prominent placement.

To protect the community's unity, as predicted by Donohue, Olien and Tichenor, the local newspapers are likely to employ a crime frame. This would be found in a focus on the individuals involved in the shooting, especially suspects and victims. This emphasis on the crime aspects and individuals is touched upon in both the audience needs and organizational pressures explanations. In the audience needs section, it's found in an emphasis on deviant individuals – primarily suspects -- rather than societal implications. The organizational pressures theory asserts that working on the crime beat influences journalists to see the shooting primarily as a crime event. In addition, it would influence journalists to identify with the government officials on their beat and see the event through their eyes – as a crime, with suspects, victims and witnesses.

H2: Local newspapers will focus the highest percentage of stories and national newspapers the least on the individuals (including victims and suspects) reflecting the crime aspects of the shooting.

The local newspapers are more likely to describe victims of the shooting as good, innocent people. That gives readers a last positive impression, which helps promote community goodwill and stability.

H3: Local newspapers will focus the highest percentage of stories and national newspapers the least on humanizing aspects of the school shooting victims.

Part of this crime frame among local newspapers may be reflected in the use of sources. Police, prosecutors and witnesses, what can be called government sources, typically provide basic information on crimes. Another type of government source that local newspapers are expected to turn to is school officials, again related to an emphasis on crime coverage. The use of government sources in articles points primarily to the organizational pressures theory, again an indicator that the local journalists identified the shooting as part of their crime beat and turned to typical criminal case sources.

H4: Local newspapers will use sources that depict the shooting as a criminal event, including law enforcement, prosecutors, witnesses and school officials, more frequently than regional and national newspaper.

While local newspapers are expected to have portrayed the school shootings as crimes, the national newspapers are expected to emphasize the societal frame. The societal frame includes the reasons for the shooting and local newspapers de-emphasize those explanations. The reasons for the shooting are expected to touch upon underlying problems in society that contributed to the shooting, including potential causes and blames, and possible responses. It's expected that the national newspapers would link the shooting to specific societal problems, such as guns, the media and insufficient government action. This emphasis on societal issues reflects the expected response of national newspapers under the community and audience needs theory. Local newspapers are expected to play down societal explanations to help preserve community cohesion and stability, also as explained in the community and audience needs theory.

The national newspapers' emphasis on a societal frame is expected to accelerate with each successive shooting, which fits with the community and audience needs theory. All three types of newspapers are expected to mention social causes more frequently over time, but the national newspapers will still mention the social causes the most frequently. Another link to societal causes anticipated from national newspapers is by explicitly linking one school shooting to previous school shootings.

H5: National newspaper will focus the highest percentage of stories and local newspapers the least on societal ills as an answer to why the shootings occurred.

Within that emphasis on societal frame, the national newspapers especially are expected to emphasize one potential cause – the weapon used. This will be found in mention of the weapons used, related issues like guns usage, gun control and hunting.

Local newspapers, representing rural areas in which gun usage is often tolerated to greater degrees than metropolitan areas, would be much less likely to link the school shooting to the weapon. Both the expected tendencies of the national and local newspapers on the gun issue are reflected in the audience needs theory.

H6: Regional and national newspapers are more likely to examine the school shooting in the context of the weapon used or related issues, like hunting or gun control.

One expected attribute of local newspapers is to serve the community and its needs during a traumatic time. That tension management frame will be found in the local newspapers providing information that the community needs to emotionally respond to the school shooting, such as where and how to get help. This emphasis is reflected in the audience needs theory, as the local newspaper provides information and advice that will help the community recover from its collective trauma.

H7: The local newspaper will emphasize tension management, found in portrayal of community cohesion and healing, more frequently than regional or national newspapers.

Content analysis. One way to detect frames is through content analysis, what Entman (1991, p. 49) sees as a way to probe for words or themes that consistently appear in a text. This study looked for key words and phrases that typify the dominant frames to help determine if the frames existed, how those frames changed over time and how those frames differed among newspapers. Content analysis was used to quantify frequency and placement of articles; key words depicting suspects and victims; potential motives, causes or solutions for the shooting incidents; use of sources; linkage to other shootings;

depiction of the community where the shooting took place; and what assistance was offered for readers dealing with the shooting. The unit of analysis was the article, which includes all news stories, editorials and opinion columns during the study period.

Reliability. Questions used in the content analysis met acceptable standards for intercoder reliability. Approximately 6.6 % of the sample were tested. **(4)**

Sample

This study examined five small-town school shootings using content analysis of newspapers, pared down from a list of 17 school shootings between February 1996 and May 1998. Shootings that occurred in cities or suburbs were rejected and several remaining small-town cases were rejected because they drew limited media attention (mostly single shootings of boyfriends or girlfriends.

Criteria

Small towns. Communities with fewer than 60,000 residents as of 1996, the most recent available U.S. Census Bureau population statistics **(5)** at the time o study, were defined as small towns. To ensure these were truly small towns, all instances of suburbs -- communities within 20 miles of a major metropolitan area (500,000-plus population) -- were eliminated.

Local newspaper. The nearest daily newspaper (a paper that publishes at least five days per week) to the crime scene was picked as the local newspaper.

Regional newspaper. The daily newspaper of at least 100,000 circulation nearest to the crime area, aside from the local paper, was picked as the regional newspaper. **(6)** The definition takes into account the location of bureaus to determine which newspaper might be more likely to cover events in the crime town. Preference was given to availability of newspapers whenever there were slight differences in distances and circulation between two newspapers.

National newspaper. *The New York Times* was selected as the national newspaper, due to its national scope, widespread respect as a leading newspaper in the United States, and availability.

Study period. The study examined one week of coverage for each newspaper, beginning with the day after the school shooting occurred.

Study subjects. Following is a brief description of each school shooting, including the town where it occurred, the date and a narrative, along with the local and regional newspapers selected. The incidents are listed in chronological order.

Moses Lake, Washington, February 2, 1996, algebra class shooting. A 14-year-old boy, dressed in a black trench coat and hat, walked late into his algebra class at Frontier Junior High School and fired a high-powered rifle. He killed two students and a teacher, and injured one other student, before a teacher subdued him. Local paper: (Moses Lake) *The Columbia Basin-Herald.* Regional paper: (Spokane) *The Spokesman-Review.* **(7)**

Pearl, Mississippi, October 1, 1997, murder conspiracy. A 16-year-old boy went to Pearl High School and shot nine students, killing two. Authorities later found the boy's mother stabbed to death. Six days later, five other teen-agers, alleged to be part of a satanic cult, were arrested in connection with the killings. Local paper: (Jackson) *The Clarion-Ledger.* Regional paper: *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (has a bureau in Jackson). **(8)**

West Paducah, Kentucky, December 1, 1997, prayer group shooting. A 14-year-old freshman opened fire on 40 students praying together before class in a West Paducah High hallway, killing three and wounding five. Local paper: *The Paducah Sun.* Regional paper: *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* **(9)**

Jonesboro, Arkansas, March 24, 1998, fire alarm ambush shooting. Two boys, ages 11 and 13, pulled a fire alarm at Westside Middle School and then shot at students and teachers from nearby woods. One teacher and four students died and 10 were wounded. Local paper: *Jonesboro Sun.* Regional paper: *The Memphis Commercial Appeal.* **(10)**

Springfield, Oregon, May 21, 1998, cafeteria shooting. A 15-year-old boy fired at students in the cafeteria at Thurston High School, killing two and wounding 22. Authorities later found his parents shot to death in the family home. Local paper: (Eugene) *The Register-Guard*. Regional paper: (Portland) *The Oregonian*. **(11)**

Results

This study found evidence that local, regional and national newspapers differ in emphasis of coverage and in framing of the school shooting stories. The national newspaper gave a greater emphasis to the societal frame, depicting the school shootings as a social problem, than did the regional or local newspapers. All three types of newspapers placed more emphasis on the societal frame with each successive shooting case. The local newspapers adopted the tension management frame by giving the school shootings more total coverage and more prominent placement of articles, and more emphasis on community cohesion and healing, than did the regional or national newspapers.

However, data didn't support the expectation that local newspapers would give more emphasis to the crime frame.

Frequency. Amount of coverage and prominent placement of articles helps assess how many resources (staff and news space) a newspaper devotes to a story and how important the story is considered. As reflected in the discussion of H1, the local newspaper may respond to a perceived community need for information by adopting a tension management frame. This frame could be found in the local newspaper running numerous stories covering a wide variety of potential story angles, and by prominent placement of articles.

A raw count of articles by newspaper, as predicted in H1, shows that local newspapers gave the stories more coverage. (See Table 1) The local newspapers accounted for more than 63 percent of the 602 articles. The trend was repeated in each of the five shooting cases: the local newspaper had the most coverage, and the regional newspaper had more coverage than the national newspaper.

Placement of articles was not significant different, although local newspapers had the highest proportion of Page 1 stories (28.3%), regional papers the next most (25.2%) and national newspapers the least (22.8%). In addition, local newspapers had the highest proportion of articles on other section fronts (8.9%), compared to 4.9% in regional newspapers and 1.8% in national newspapers.

Focus on crime. This research considers whether the local newspaper will be more likely to use a crime frame, found by coverage of some individuals, especially portraying the school shooting as caused by individuals (suspects) engaged in deviant behavior.

There was no statistically significant evidence to support H2, which proposed that local newspapers would focus on individuals, including victims and suspects, more frequently than regional and national newspapers. Data in Table 2 contradicts H2, as the national newspaper was the most likely and local newspaper the least likely to mention the suspect by name. National and regional newspapers mentioned a suspect in more than half of the articles, while local newspaper less than half the time. Combined, the three types of newspapers mentioned suspects in 46% of the articles. National newspapers were most likely to mention the suspect's name first in an article, the suspect's age, appearance, participation in typical activities (such as sports) and previous threats of violence. In eight of the 10 measures, the local newspaper mentioned such attributes the least often.

Data on coverage of victims in Table 3 partially supports H2, but the measures weren't statistically significant. Local newspapers were slightly more likely to mention a victim than a regional newspaper or a national newspaper. Victims were named in 41% of the articles. Local newspapers were more likely to mention a victim's name first in an article.

Humanizing victims. Local newspapers were expected to be more likely to portray victims in humanizing terms, but no significant differences were found among the three types of newspapers. (See Table 3) Local newspapers were slightly more likely to note any hobbies or activities among victims, but regional newspapers mentioned victims' parents and relatives, and friends, the most frequently, with local newspapers the second-most frequent. National newspapers mentioned a victim's age most frequently. None of the articles connected a victim with any mention of deviant activity.

Sources. Use of sources can indicate frames. Local newspapers were expected to use government sources, especially law enforcement, prosecutors, witnesses and school officials, to reinforce their framing of the school shooting as a crime event.

The data showed no significant differences among the three types of newspapers in frequency of sources and little support for H4. All three types of newspapers depended primarily on law enforcement/elected officials (18.0% overall), witnesses/students (16.6% overall), and school officials (15.0% overall) as sources, the types of sources that would place the story within the context of a school crime. Local newspapers were more likely to use school officials (16.8%) as sources than the regional and national newspapers, while regional newspapers were more likely to use law enforcement/elected officials (20.0%) and witness/student (18.5%).

There were marginally significant differences ($p<.10$) in first sources cited in an article, but offered mixed support for H4. Local newspapers used school officials the most frequently and were just short of regional newspapers in using law enforcement sources, but used witness/student the least frequently.

One indication that the law enforcement source-journalist relationship could affect newspaper coverage was found in an editorial page column by Mary Powell in *The Columbia Basin Herald* **(12),** responding to the Moses Lake shooting. Powell wrote that the paper's editor decided to cooperate with police and school officials, to delay interviews with children directly involved in the shooting and to stay away from the crime scene until things were sorted out.

Societal ills. National newspapers were expected to more frequently emphasize the societal frame, especially reasons for the shooting. That emphasis was anticipated to highlight potential causes, assess sources of blame, and possible solutions to the school shooting. These differences can be explained by the community and audience needs theory, which anticipated the local newspaper playing down underlying causes to preserve community cohesion and stability, while national newspapers would highlight the causes to meet community and audience interests.

Evidence supports H5, which suggests that national newspapers would focus the most attention and local newspapers the least on societal ills as an answer to why the crimes occurred. It suggests that national and regional newspapers would depict the shootings as a trend and representative of a cultural phenomenon, perhaps as part of a broader social malaise.

Such an approach was supported within one regional newspaper article. Columnist Michele McLellan wrote that exploration of causes should be a goal in *The Oregonian's* continuing coverage of the Springfield shooting, beyond "incremental developments, handicapping court strategies and offering recreations of events that add few new details. ... (N)ewspapers often produce them at the expense of devoting time to stories on the broader problems events may represent as well as potential solutions." **(13)**

Evidence strongly supports H4. (See Table 4) On eight of the nine measures that were statistically significant ($p < .05$), national newspapers were the most likely and local newspapers least likely to ascribe a motive, potential cause or solution to the school shooting. The most common items mentioned (except for "other"), in order of frequency, were guns and gun culture; media, including television, movies, newspapers and magazines; and schools and school security. Media were mentioned as a potential motive, cause or solution in nearly one of four national articles, compared to just 7% in the local newspapers. Of the 14 measures (except for "other"), only counseling, was mentioned at least 10% in the local newspapers. Counseling fits well with another expected response of local newspapers, to provide information that helps the community heal (see H6) In comparison, both the regional and national newspapers reached 10% in six measures.

In addition, national newspapers were most likely and local newspapers least likely to mention other school shootings, to mention this shooting as part of a trend and to mention other crimes. (See Table 5) Two in five national articles mentioned other crimes, compared to one in seven articles in local newspapers.

Data strongly supported some expected chronological trends, as all three types of newspapers more frequently mentioned social causes with each successive shooting. The latter two shootings had a higher percentage of stories that mentioned a potential cause, motive or solution. (See Table 6) In six of the seven measures that were statistically significant ($p<.05$), the highest percentage of causes, motives or solutions occurred in either the March 1998 Jonesboro or May 1998 Springfield shooting, the last two in chronological order. Similar patterns could be found in the newspapers mentioning the latest school shooting in the context of other school shootings, as part of a trend, and other crimes. (See Table 7). On two of the three significant measures, the Springfield shooting had the most frequent mention and Jonesboro the second-most frequent mention.

Raw story totals support H7 as well, especially when the national newspaper coverage pattern is taken into account. The national newspaper clearly had a greater emphasis on the social problems angle of the shootings stories and it published more articles on the latter shootings. (See Table 1)

Blaming guns. As part of that emphasis on social causes, the national and regional newspapers were expected to focus more on the weapons used in the shooting than the local newspapers. H6 suggested that regional and national newspapers would be more likely to examine the shootings in the context of the weapons used in the assaults, primarily guns. A report by The Freedom Forum **(14)** on media coverage of the Jonesboro shooting supported this hypothesis, as it found news magazines and national news accounts especially, and national newspapers less so, citing guns and gun culture as part of the reasons behind the shooting.

Data from this study support that premise. Regional and national newspapers mentioned guns/gun culture and gun control ($p<.01$) as a possible cause, motive or solution in the shootings more than twice as frequently as did local newspapers. (See Table 4)

One example of this can be found in a regional newspaper. *The Oregonian*, in its coverage May 22, 1998, the day after the Springfield shooting, devoted nearly half of its two editorial pages to a discussion of guns. Included were side-by-side guest columns under the banner heading: "Should tragedy spur gun control or more responsibility?" **(15)**

In addition, guns/gun culture showed a gradual growth in mention as a potential cause, motive or solution, from no mention in the first shooting to mention in nearly 20% of the articles in the last shooting. (See Table 5) Gun control showed a similar trend, from no mention in the first shooting to more than 12% in the fifth shooting.

Community cohesion, healing. Local newspapers were expected to provide information, fitting the tension management frame, that the community needed to respond to the school shooting and begin recovering from the trauma. Those needs may include places to get help, advice on dealing with the shooting and where to make donations.

Evidence mostly supports H7, which suggested that local newspapers would be more apt to emphasize community cohesion and healing. (See Table 8) The local newspaper more frequently provided information of help to readers, including places to get help and where to make donations. As mentioned previously, local newspapers cited counseling more frequently than any other potential cause, blame or solution, which fits well with this expectation of local newspapers providing information of help to its community. (See Table 4)

Even the labels placed atop the pages in the local newspaper's coverage reflected that emphasis on community reaction to the shootings. Three of the local newspapers used headers on some pages, each using the word tragedy: "Tragedy in Pearl" in *The Clarion-Ledger*, "Heath Tragedy" in *The Paducah Sun* and "Tragedy Hits Home" in *The Register-Guard*. By contrast, the regional and national newspapers used more prosaic labels: "Shootings in a Schoolhouse" (Jonesboro) and "Bloodshed in a Schoolyard" (Springfield) in *The New York Times*, "Springfield School Shootings" in *The Oregonian* and "Middle School Massacre" (Jonesboro) in *The Commercial-Appeal*.

Part of this difference in approach comes from a close identity between small-town journalists and the people they cover. Powell, in her *The Columbia Basin Herald* column, wrote that she reacted to the Moses Lake shooting as a community resident. "For us local media, the job of getting a story that we couldn't comprehend, about people we knew or worked with, seemed an insurmountable task. We wanted to know everything, too, not so much as a news reporter, but as a member of our community." **(16)**

That sensitivity to the community was reflected elsewhere. In the Jonesboro shootings, reporter/photographer Curt Hodges didn't take photographs of victims shortly after the shooting, a reaction which John Troutt Jr., editor and owner of *The Jonesboro Sun*, said exhibited a typical sensitivity of his news staff **(17)**. The paper won wide praise from Jonesboro citizens for its consideration shown to victims and families, its absence of sensationalism and accuracy. **(18)**

Discussion

Results indicated that local, regional and national newspapers covered the school shootings in different ways. The evidence supported four of the seven hypotheses and two of the three expected frames. Looking at the hypotheses, the data offer solid support for the audience and community needs theory, and limited support for the organizational pressures theory. Overall, the results support the expectation that newspapers cover events of social conflict differently, depending on their community orientation.

The data supports the expectations that local newspapers would employ a tension management frame. This support was found in local newspapers having the most coverage and the most prominent placement (although not statistically significant), an indicator of the newspaper's attempt to meet the community and audience needs. The local newspapers also employed the tension management frame by providing information on where to get help and how to respond, emphasizing community cohesion and healing.

The societal frame was support as well. As expected, the national newspaper had the greatest emphasis and local newspapers the least on potential causes, blame or solutions to the shooting. As expected, the guns and gun culture were prominently mentioned as a part of the societal problems. Also as expected, the emphasis on the societal issues grew among all types of newspapers with each subsequent school shooting, but the national newspaper remained the most prominent in its societal issues coverage.

However, the data didn't support assertions that local newspapers would more frequently employ a crime frame. Instead of local newspapers mentioning suspects the most often, it was the national newspaper that focused more frequently on the suspect (on nine of 10 measures). None of the source items was statistically significant. Depiction of victims showed no significant differences, although the local newspaper had the most frequent mention in three of the seven humanizing victims measures.

The frame analysis offers stronger support for the audience and community needs explanation than the organizational pressures theory. As explained previously, local newspapers would respond to a perceived community and audience need by supplying information the community needs to respond to the traumatic event, while placing little emphasis on societal implications. The national newspaper, responding to a broader community of interest, would emphasize the societal implications and pay little attention to local information needs. The regional newspapers were expected to be somewhere between the local and national newspapers.

The data solidly supported the premise that community and audience needs influence how newspapers cover events. Local newspapers printed the most articles and gave the articles the most prominent placement, a reflection of the information needs of their readers, as noted in the tension management frame. National newspapers more frequently focused on societal ills to explain the shootings and emphasized the role of weapons used in the shootings, reflecting the audience's need for a broad societal interpretation and explanation, part of the societal frame. The local newspapers were more likely to emphasize community cohesion and healing, part of tension management and a response to the community's needs to maintain stability. However, an anticipated focus among local newspapers on the individuals involved in a crime event weren't found. Data backs up four of the six hypotheses supporting the community and audience needs theory.

Results offer little support for the organizational pressures theory, which expected the local newspapers to be more likely to portray the school shootings as a crime event. Data didn't show that local newspapers were more likely to focus on individuals, a key element of depicting the school shooting as a crime. Local newspapers, instead of being the most likely to name suspects, were the least likely. Local newspapers were only slightly more likely to name victims or present victims in humanizing ways. Instead of local newspapers being more likely to use law enforcement and other government sources, no significant differences were found.

Limitations

While the results offer support for the overriding theory that newspaper coverage is a product of its community, several limitations deserve mention.

First is a wide spread in the numbers of stories among the three types of newspapers. Since these analyses were by frequency within stories, the differences in raw numbers (local newspapers accounted for 63% of the stories) could skew results. For instance, in looking at use of sources, on one day, the local newspaper may run 20 stories and use police sources in six (30%), the regional newspaper may run eight stories and use police sources in three (38%) and the national newspaper may run two stories and use police sources in one (50%).

A second limitation is in use of the article as the unit of analysis. Thus, a fraction of a sentence and 2,000-word article devoted to a particular item would be counted equally. Analysis of the paragraph or sentence thus could result in different findings.

A third potential limitation is with the sample, which drew one week's worth of newspaper articles. This gave newspapers little time to respond to the event. There may be different results by examining a longer coverage period.

A fourth limitation may be in the newspapers used in the study. Perhaps the small number of newspapers used in the study (10) didn't provide an accurate view of journalism in the 1990s. Or perhaps *The New York Times* wasn't the best choice as the national newspaper. There may also have been significant differences in newspaper ownership, the sizes of the newspapers, or in the communities themselves.

Another factor may be the nature of the events themselves. Perhaps there is something about youths as killers and/or victims that cause newspapers to frame the events differently than normal.

Footnotes

1. "Experts seek reasons for epidemic of youth violence," *The Oregonian*, 24 May 1998, sec. A, p. 14, col. 2.
2. Roper Center at University of Connecticut Public Opinion Online, Gallup Organization question ID USGALLUP.99AP26,R29 and R31, Lexis-Nexis, visited May 5, 1999.
3. Examined coverage in the *New York Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Washington Post, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*. For each of the five shootings used in this study, one month of coverage in each newspaper was examined, and 391 articles were found. The chronological progression: first incident, 1.8% of the total; second, 6.9%; third, 15.6%; fourth, 43.7%; and fifth, 32%
4. Four people coded 40 of the 602 articles. Questions met Cronbach's alpha of .8, except for questions in sections on cause/blame and solutions. Those two categories were compressed into one category for the actual coding.
5. Population estimates for 1996 from United States Census Bureau, *www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city*
6. Newspaper circulation figures from *Bacon's Newspaper Directory*, 1997.
7. Moses Lake, Wash., population 13,984, 106 miles southwest of Spokane. Circulation: *The Columbia Basin-Herald*, 8,806 daily, no Sunday; *The Spokesman-Review*, 118,770 daily and 147,328 Sunday.
8. Pearl, Miss., population 21,175, located five miles east of Jackson, 213 miles south of Memphis. Circulation: *The Clarion-Ledger*, 107,876 daily and 127,393 Sunday; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 178,181 daily and 267,935 Sunday.
9. Paducah, Ky., population 26,601, located 173 miles southeast of St. Louis. Circulation: *The Paducah Sun*, 30,120 daily and 32,462 Sunday; *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 323,374 daily and 541,991 Sunday.
10. Jonesboro, Ark., population 52,656, located 70 miles northwest of Memphis. Circulation: *Jonesboro Sun*, 26,965 daily and 29,530 Sunday; *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 178,181 daily and 267,935 Sunday.
11. Springfield, Ore., population 49,430, located four miles southeast of Eugene and 110 miles south of Portland. Circulation: *The Register-Guard*, 75,881 daily and 79,428 Sunday; *The Oregonian*, 349,193 daily and 445,293 Sunday.
12. "Getting the story: Us versus them," *Columbia Basin Herald*, 8 February 1996, sec. 1, p. 4, col. 3.
13. McLellan, Michele. "Coverage should have depth, restraint," *The Oregonian*, 24 May 1998, sec. B, p. 1, col. 3 and p. 2, col. 1.
14. "Coverage should have depth, restraint," *The Oregonian*, 24 May 1998, sec. B, p. 1, col 3 and p. 2, col. 1.
15. "We need leadership to revise gun laws" and "Accountability, not ban key to cutting violence," *The Oregonian*, 22 May 1998, sec. D, p. 15, col. 1-3.
16. "Getting the story: Us versus them," *Columbia Basin Herald*, 8 February 1996, sec. 1, p. 4, col. 3.
17. The Freedom Forum, *Jonesboro: Were the Media Fair?* (Arlington, Va.: The Freedom Forum, 1998), 5
18. The Freedom Forum, 13.

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TABLE 1

Article totals, by types of newspaper, for each school shooting, listed in chronological order.

	Moses Lake	Pearl	Paducah	Jonesboro	Springfield	Totals
Local	4.7% n=28	10.0% n=60	11.0% n=66	20.8% n=125	17.1% n=103	63.4% n=382
Regional	3.0% n=18	0.8% n=5	1.7% n=10	6.5% n=39	15.1% n=91	27.1% n=163
National	0.2% n=1	0.2% n=1	1.2% n=7	3.5% n=21	4.5% n=27	9.5% n=57
Totals	7.8% n=47	11.0% n=66	13.8% n=83	30.7% n=185	36.7% n=221	100% n=602

TABLE 2

Frequency, in percentages, in which a suspect is mentioned, by type of newspaper.

	National	Regional	Local	Total	P<
Suspect name	54.4	53.4	42.4	46.5	.05
Age	50.9	37.4	30.1	34.1	.01
First name in article	26.3	21.5	12.0	15.9	.01
Parents, relatives	15.8	11.7	11.8	12.1	NS
Violent threats	17.5	9.2	5.2	7.5	.01
Appearance	14.0	9.2	5.2	7.1	.05
Deviant behavior	14.0	6.1	6.6	7.1	NS
Friends	5.3	7.4	4.7	5.5	NS
Hobbies, activities	19.3	4.9	3.7	5.5	.01
Picked on	7.0	4.9	2.1	3.3	.10
	n=57	n=163	n=382	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 3

Frequency, in percentages, in which a victim is mentioned, by type of newspaper.

	National	Regional	Local	Total	P<
Victim name	36.8	41.1	42.7	41.7	NS
Age	33.3	27.6	23.6	25.6	NS
First name in article	15.8	15.3	18.8	17.6	NS
Parents, relatives	14.0	18.4	17.3	17.3	NS
Friends	14.0	16.0	14.4	14.8	NS
Hobbies, activities	12.3	12.3	12.8	12.6	NS
Deviance	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	NS
	n=57	n=163	n=382	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 4

Frequency in which suggested motives, causes or solutions to the school shooting are mentioned, by newspaper type, in percentages

	National	Regional	Local	Total	p<
Guns, gun culture	19.3	18.4	7.1	11.3	.01
Media (movies, TV)	24.6	14.7	7.1	10.8	.01
Schools, school security	8.8	12.3	9.2	10.0	NS
Counseling	5.3	9.8	10.2	9.6	NS
Parents	15.8	14.7	5.2	8.8	.01
Government, laws	14.0	11.7	6.5	8.6	.05
Religion, prayer	8.8	4.3	9.9	8.3	.10
Gun control	17.5	11.0	2.9	6.5	.01
Law enforcement	3.5	8.0	3.7	4.8	.10
Dialogue	5.3	6.1	2.9	4.0	NS
Gangs, cults	10.5	2.5	2.4	3.2	.01
Computers, video games	7.0	4.9	1.0	2.7	.01
Incivility	0.0	2.5	2.9	2.5	NS
Drugs, alcohol	7.0	3.1	1.3	2.3	.05
Other	24.6	26.4	14.1	18.4	.01
	n=57	n=163	n=382	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 5

Frequency in which other school shootings, the latest shooting as part of a trend, other crimes, tragedies and disasters are mentioned, by type of newspaper, in percentages

	National	Regional	Local	Total	P<
Mention of other crimes	40.4	25.2	13.1	18.9	.01
Mention other school shootings	38.6	22.1	9.9	15.9	.01
Latest shooting as part of trend	26.3	19.6	5.8	11.5	.01
Mention other tragedies	1.8	1.2	2.4	2.0	NS
Mention other disasters	0.0	0.6	1.6	1.2	NS
	n=57	n=163	n=382	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 6

Frequency in which suggested motives, causes or solutions to the school shooting are mentioned, by school shooting coverage period, in percentages.

	Feb. 96 (Moses Lk)	Oct. 97 (Pearl)	Dec. 97 (Paducah)	Mar. 98 (Jonesboro)	May 98 (Springfield)	Total	P<
Guns, gun culture	0.0	1.5	2.4	11.4	19.9	11.3	.01
Media (movies, TV)	8.5	4.5	10.8	7.0	16.3	10.8	.05
Schools, school security	12.8	7.6	12.0	7.6	6.7	10.0	NS
Counseling	10.6	7.6	10.8	7.6	11.3	9.6	NS
Parents	8.5	6.1	7.2	11.9	7.7	8.8	NS
Government, laws	0.0	3.0	3.6	13.5	10.0	8.6	.01
Religion, prayer	8.5	7.6	19.3	8.1	4.5	8.3	.01
Gun control	0.0	0.0	2.4	4.9	12.7	6.5	.01
Law enforcement	2.1	3.0	2.4	0.5	10.4	4.8	.01
Dialogue	6.4	4.5	6.0	2.7	3.6	4.0	NS
Gangs, cults	0.0	7.6	2.4	4.3	1.8	3.2	.10
Computers, video games	2.1	1.5	0.0	1.6	5.0	2.7	.10
Incivility	2.1	3.0	0.0	3.2	2.7	2.5	NS
Drugs, alcohol	0.0	3.0	1.2	1.1	4.1	2.3	NS
Other	17.0	7.6	16.9	15.7	24.9	18.4	.05
	n=47	n=66	n=83	n=185	n=221	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 7

Comparison of other school shootings, the latest shooting as part of a trend, and other crimes, by school shooting coverage period, in percentages.

	Feb. 96 (Moses Lk)	Oct. 97 (Pearl)	Dec. 97 (Paducah)	Mar. 98 (Jonesboro)	May 98 (Springfield)	Total	P<
Mention of other school shootings	4.3	4.5	8.4	14.6	25.8	15.9	.01
Latest shooting, as part of a trend	4.3	7.7	3.6	10.3	18.1	11.5	.01
Mention of other crimes	10.6	25.8	16.9	13.0	24.4	18.9	.01
Mention of other tragedies	0	1.5	2.4	3.2	1.4	2.0	NS
Mention of natural disasters	0	0	0	2.2	1.4	1.2	NS
	n=47	n=66	n=83	n=185	n=221	n = 602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

TABLE 8

Frequency of articles that provide information of potential help to readers, by newspaper type, in percentages.

	National	Regional	Local	Total	P<
Places to get help	0.0	2.5	8.6	6.1	.01
Advice to deal with problems	0.0	5.5	5.8	5.1	NS
What to say, do for children	0.0	3.7	2.9	2.8	NS
Where to make donations	0.0	3.7	8.1	6.1	.05
	n=57	n=163	n=382	n=602	

NS: Not significant at p<.10

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Reader mindset and bias

A closer look at the people who say we skew the news

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Reader mindset and bias

A closer look at the people who say we skew the news

Abstract

Reader perception of media bias has been found in several studies going back many years. A reader has at least two routes to reach a perception of bias: the actual existence of bias, or a reinforcing predisposition within himself to believe bias exists. This study is a secondary analysis of the raw data in the American Society of Newspaper Editors 1999 survey to consider the second route. Do readers who think daily newspapers are biased have a particular mindset that helps them arrive at that opinion? This research has found strong correlation between certain mindsets and the perception of bias.

Reader mindset and bias

A closer look at the people who say we skew the news

Those "egg-sucking-dog liberals" sure get a lot of flattering coverage, one reader said. Another thought he was being preached at: "They tell you who to vote for. It's insulting." One person wanted the news straight – "Report the facts, then let me make up my own conclusions" – yet another was suspicious that a story lacked an apparent reason to be there: "There was no explanation of why the story was important, and so I just assumed somebody wanted it there."

Who are these people, and why are they saying such unpleasant things about newspapers? They're readers who were either surveyed or asked to join a focus group for the latest credibility study by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.[1] Fully 78 percent of those surveyed said daily newspapers were biased, a percentage that appears to have risen since the last ASNE survey 15 years ago.[2] That earlier survey asked different questions to determine the breadth of the credibility problem – for example, do newspapers respect people's privacy and are reporters well trained – but its two bias-specific questions revealed a much smaller level of concern. Just one-fifth said then that reporters didn't try to be objective, and only little more than half said reporters' personal biases often were reflected in their stories.

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[1] American Society of Newspaper Editors. *Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press*, 1999.

[2] American Society of Newspaper Editors. *Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust*, 1985.

Two of the main issues in the credibility crisis, as some are calling it, are accuracy and bias. Accuracy is getting all the facts and getting them right, which leaves little room for interpretation: The press was right, or it wasn't. Bias, however, is a matter of perspective, so the perspective of those who accuse the media of bias is important to understand. Is there something in the personal context of a reader that leads him to more easily perceive bias? Does he feel disenfranchised? Is he offended by simplistic writing? Does he want interpretation, or just the facts? In short, what is the mindset of a reader who thinks the newspaper is biased?

A secondary analysis of ASNE's raw data looked for clues to perspectives that might be fertile ground for perceiving bias. If we better understand those psychological factors, perhaps we can adapt our methods and presentation to minimize the risk of bias perception. If nothing else, a clearer picture of how bias perception develops could help us work with more focus on removing the bias that actually exists.

Background

Accusations of bias are not new. Early cases in modern history tended to focus on political stories. Franklin D. Roosevelt thought the press was "about 200 percent" against him, and Adlai Stevenson attacked the "one-party press."[3] Academics began studying the issue in the 1950s, but as bad as the press bias may have been, by 1980, when Robert

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[3] David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalists in the 1990s: U.S. News People at the End of an Era.* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), xii.

Stevenson and Mark Greene reviewed a collection of studies, little evidence was found of "large scale, systematic favoring of one political party or candidate over the other in the last two or three decades."[4] Studies of the 1984,[5] 1988,[6] and 1992 campaigns,[7] however, found that if any candidate was given preferential coverage, it was the Republican candidate. In some cases, the candidate who received the newspaper's editorial endorsement also received better coverage.[8]

Of course, perceptions of bias are not confined to the political arena. As early as 1969, a Roper study found evidence of a more general problem for the media,[9] and a downward trend began.

ASNE's 1985 survey compared questions of fairness, accuracy, and concern for the community's well-being, among other questions, to determine that three-fourths of adults had a problem with the media's credibility. Researchers found that many people believed the press exploited the privacy of ordinary people and complained that too much bad news or overdramatized stories were reported. Many people also thought that a byline entitled reporters to put their opinion in news stories, and a fourth said the front page contained more opinion than the rest of the paper.

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[4] Robert Stevenson and Mark Greene. "A Reconsideration of Bias in the News." *Journalism Quarterly* (Spring 1980): 115.

[5] James Stovall. "Coverage of 1984 Presidential Campaign." *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (Summer 1988): 443-9.

[6] Keith Kenney and Chris Simpson. "Was Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Race by Washington's Two Major Dailies Biased?" *Journalism Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 345-55.

[7] Gordon Mantler and David Whiteman. "Attention to candidates and issues in newspaper coverage of 1992 presidential campaign." *Newspaper Research Journal* 16, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 14-28.

[8] Guido H. Stempel III. "The Prestige Press Meets the Third-Party Challenge." *Journalism Quarterly* 46 (Winter 1969): 699-706.

[9] Burns W. Roper. "A 10-year view of public attitudes toward television and other mass media, 1959-1968." New York: Television Information Office.

The results were considered so gloomy that the report offered a collection of tips for improving credibility even before it detailed its grim results. The advice ranged from the seemingly obvious – practice good journalism, be accessible, respect people – to the more pointed, such as aggressively pursuing the role of the people's advocate.

The public's attitude toward the press hadn't improved much when ASNE returned for its second credibility survey. The media still make too many factual and grammar mistakes, don't understand or respect their audiences, and still over-report sensational stories to make a buck. This time, ASNE also asked journalists what they thought of their newspapers. Agreement between the public and the newsroom was found in some areas, such as the importance of accuracy, but they split sharply when it came to more subjective topics. Journalists rated themselves higher than the public did when asked if their newspapers understood their communities, whether bias was a problem in their stories and if they gave too much play to sensational stories.

Clearly, a divide exists between the attitudes of journalists and the public they serve. Who's right? One intriguing study at Colorado State University looked at how readers perceive the bias of sources in stories and hypothesized that the perception may be the fault of the reader, whose viewpoint could be the result of "naivete":

> "Newspaper readership is shrinking and as a consequence, there may be less attentive and less expert consumers of news. It may be that there is something in the way journalists approach achieving objectivity that news consumers do not acknowledge, misunderstand, or reject."[10]

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[10] Donna Rouner, Michael D. Slater, and Judith Buddenbaum, "Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias," paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism in Mass

If a reader isn't making the same assumptions about the bias of news sources that the journalist makes, the authors suggest, the story won't be interpreted as intended. That presents reporters with a challenging question: What should they do, if anything, to reveal or clarify the bias of their news sources?

Traditionally, journalists have tried to achieve objectivity by giving equal play to all sides in a story. Such attempts are not always successful: A Michigan State University study found that only 7 percent of the stories in its sample were evenly balanced.[11] But "balance" may not be the answer, because if the reporter cites an equal number of sources on all sides, unbiased information may still be the odd man out:

> The practice of story balance "may often mean purposefully seeking out biased sources to present one side's view and the other side's view. This is, of course, presented in the name of balance and fairness; it is not objective, but rather presents two biased sources' perspectives. The end goal is, presumably, neutrality."[12]

The ASNE sample

This study poses a series of questions about the mindsets of the ASNE respondents and their understanding of bias, so a quick look at who they are and how they define bias is in order. The ASNE report provides this portrait of those who agree the media are biased, and those who don't agree.

Communication, Newspaper Division, Washington, D.C., 1995. Available at http://list.msu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind9602a&L=aejmc&F=&S=&P=960.

[11] Frederick Fico and Stan Soffin, "Fairness and Balance of Selected Newspaper Coverage of Controversial National, State, and Local Issues." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (Autumn 1995).

[12] Rouner, Slater, and Buddenbaum, "Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias."

Demographics of readers ***Percentages read vertically***	**Media are biased**	
	Agree: 78%	**Disagree: 17%**
Men	50	43
Women	50	57
Median age	42	46
High school graduate	30	36
College graduate	36	28
White-collar	43	35
Blue-collar	23	21
Democrat	34	40
Republican	32	27
Independent	26	27
White	85	82
Black	9	7
Hispanic	3	7
Median income	$48,800	$44,600

As the ASNE report notes, given the overwhelming majority that thinks the media are biased, it is perhaps more interesting to look at those who disagree. These folks tend to be older, women, less educated, blue-collar workers earning less money, and Democrats.

Next, how did the sample define bias? Perhaps not surprisingly, there was little consensus. The definition was divided fairly equally among three points of view:

Definition of Bias	**% Readers**
Not being open-minded and neutral about the facts	30
Having an agenda and shaping the news report to fit it	29
Showing favoritism to particular social or political groups	29
All of those factors	8
None of those factors or don't know	4

Research method

The survey from which the data used in this study were drawn was sponsored by the American Society of Newspaper Editors and funded by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation and eight newspapers: the Philadelphia Inquirer; the Oregonian, Portland; Austin (Texas) American-Statesman; San Jose (Calif.) Mercury News; Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune; The Gazette, Colorado Springs; The Daily Press, Newport News, Va.; and Florida Today, Melbourne.

A sample of 3,000 adults representative of the U.S. adult population was surveyed by Urban & Associates of Sharon, Mass., in 23-minute telephone interviews from April 9 through May 11, 1998. The response rate was 42 percent.

Research questions

Trying to get inside the head of a reader is difficult, and some might argue that it's impossible. However, the ASNE survey included questions that allow us to make the attempt. To see whether readers with particular perspectives were more likely to perceive bias, five of ASNE's nonbias-specific questions were compared to ASNE's key bias question: "Some people say that the news media are biased, while others say that's not true. In general, do you agree with the assessment that there's bias in the news media?" The five ASNE questions form the heart of – and are quoted or paraphrased within – this study's first five research questions.

Question No. 1: How does the perception of bias correlate to readers who "think that daily newspapers run lots of articles that are 'dumbed down' and don't respect readers' intelligence"?

Question No. 2: How does the perception of bias correlate to readers who "think that daily newspapers don't really understand the issues that are important to your community"?

Question No. 3: How does the perception of bias correlate to readers who "believe this country is really governed by a small group of powerful people, and what the public wants or does has little real effect on things"? When compared in the crosstab, responses were collapsed into a dichotomous variable of "strongly agree" and "agree" against "disagree" and "strongly disagree."

Question No. 4: How does the perception of bias correlate to readers who would "rather see your daily newspaper present only factual coverage of news events or present both the facts and explanations that can give people better insight into the news"?

Question No. 5: How does the perception of bias correlate to readers who are "concerned" about the credibility of stories that use unidentified sources? Those who answered "very concerned" were compared to those who were only "somewhat concerned."

Question No. 6: The survey asked two questions that get at the impact of having experience with the news process on credibility and perceived bias. Of those who have ever had been the subject of a news story, or been interviewed by a reporter, the survey asked, "Did you feel that you were quoted correctly?" and "Do you feel that the facts were reported accurately, or did you find errors in the story?" The answers to these two questions were checked for strength of relevance to perceived bias.

Question No. 7: Do the readers' opinions of journalists affect their perception of bias? To answer this question, continuous variables were created to measure the public's opinion of journalists' motivations and the public's opinion of newspaper behavior.

A count index for the perception of bias in the operation of newspapers as an institution used answers that agreed with these statements:

1) "Do you think daily newspapers make biased decisions about what news to publish?"

2) "Do you think daily newspapers provide unfair and unbalanced reporting of groups that they might disagree with?"

3) "Do you think daily newspapers are concerned mainly with making profits?"

4) "Some people believe that powerful people or organizations can get stories they want into the paper, or keep stories out of the paper if they don't want them covered. Do you, personally, share this opinion?"

5) "Do you think daily newspapers allow advertisers' interests to influence news decisions?"

A means index of reader opinion of journalists' values and news judgment as individuals used these questions (with "1" reflecting strong agreement, "2" agreement, "3" disagreement and "4" strong disagreement):

1) "Journalists chase sensational stories because they think it'll sell newspapers, not because they think it's important news."

2) "Journalists enjoy reporting on the personal failings of politicians and public figures."

3) "Journalists pay more attention to what their editors want than what their readers want."

4) "It doesn't matter how well things are going in America, the press only reports bad news and ignores the good things."

Research findings

Strong correlation was found in the first five research questions.

- Readers who thought newspapers ran simplistic, "dumbed-down" stories were more likely to see bias. And readers who think daily newspapers don't respect their intelligence are not an elite few: 43 percent of the total ASNE sample of readers shared that opinion.

- Readers with little faith in daily newspapers' understanding of the community tended to see bias. Almost a third of the ASNE readers – 32 percent – doubted newspapers' grasp of local issues.

- Readers who felt a sense of civic powerless because they think the country is governed by a small group of people – and 29 percent of the readers did – saw bias more often.

- Readers who wanted just the facts, without interpretation, were more likely to perceive bias. Of ASNE's readers, 28 percent wanted the facts without the newspaper's interpretation, and those readers are an older group. The ASNE report said that adults over the age of 45 are "significantly more likely" to want their news interpretation-free.

- Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly, readers who doubted the credibility of stories that used unidentified sources were also more likely to perceive bias. A lot of readers are bothered by unnamed sources: 28 percent are "very concerned" about the credibility of stories that use them, and 49 percent are "somewhat concerned."

Research questions	% who perceived bias	% who perceived no bias	N	Gamma	p
1) Yes, newspapers run "dumbed down" articles and don't respect my intelligence.	92%	77%	2,566	-.537	p<.001
2) No, newspapers don't understand the issues important to my community.	91%	79%	2,596	-.463	p<.001
3) Yes, the country is governed by a small group of powerful people and what the public wants has little effect.	89%	75%	1,419	.462	p<.001
4) I want just the facts, not facts and explanations.	89%	81%	2,785	.302	p<.001
5) "Unidentified sources" make me very concerned about credibility.	87%	83%	2,219	.180	p<.005

Clearly, readers don't like having their intelligence insulted. The strongest association, as measured by the Gamma score, exists between perceived bias and "dumbed-down" articles.

Question No. 6: No one who has been interviewed by a reporter is happy when the quotes are wrong or the facts are botched. And given the overwhelming number of people who generally perceive bias, it's not surprising that the vast majority of those with personal experience with newspapers also perceive bias. Even among those with a positive newspaper experience – the quotes were right and the facts were right – eight out of 10 people considered newspapers biased. Two interesting facts emerge, however. It appears that being quoted incorrectly carries the greater sting, as measured by Gamma scores, and that women who have been stung are driving the correlation between newspaper mistakes and bias perception.

Those who perceive newspaper bias who have been quoted (N = 843)	% quoted correctly	% quoted incorrectly	Chi Square	Gamma	P
Overall	81%	93%	18.2	-.507	p<.001
Men	85%	94%	6.8	-.483	p<.01
Women	78%	92%	12.4	-.541	p<.001

Those who perceive newspaper bias who were source for story (N = 845)	% who found no errors	% who found errors	Chi Square	Gamma	P
Overall	80%	90%	14	-.388	p<.001
Men	85%	90%	2.6	-.244	p<.2
Women	76%	91%	13.6	-.511	p<.001

Question No. 7: Perhaps not surprisingly, readers who have a higher opinion of journalists' values perceive fewer biased acts by newspapers. As the scale of those who think journalists have poor values and news judgment – such as enjoying the failings of politicians and other public figures, or chasing sensational stories merely to sell newspapers – fell, the perception of bias also fell. The better opinion people have of journalists, the less bias is seen in newspaper behavior.

Summary and conclusions

To fix a problem, one must first be able to recognize and accept it as a problem. Journalists see the problem of spelling, grammar and factual mistakes just as well as their readers, if not better. The problem of bias, however, is much more difficult for journalists to verify and quantify, and in fact, the report found that 73 percent of journalists say their newspaper makes "a conscious effort to present opposing points of view on controversial issues." Understanding some of the psychological factors behind a perception of bias may help journalists devise strategies to chip away at the problem.

Some may suggest that focusing on bias is much ado about nothing important – at least not important to the balance sheet. As long ago as 1981, studies were proving that perceived bias rarely predicted a reader's satisfaction with the newspaper, although there was a correlation. In fact, researchers suggested then that readers "expect some degree of sensationalizing and nonobjectivity."[13] Even the 1999 ASNE survey finds an "element of forgiveness" among readers who perceive bias.[14]

If the absence of perceived bias doesn't translate into improved reader satisfaction, and therefore, one theorizes, improved circulation, some might urge that we instead spend more time on efforts more likely to increase bottom lines, such as exploiting Internet opportunities. However, even if the skeptics aren't convinced by a moral argument – that providing biased coverage, or at least coverage that is perceived to be biased, is just plain wrong – they should still consider the practical implications. For example, while the typical reader may not notice or care about bias, politicians and judges do. Legislatures and courts wield enormous power over the future of the media, and their support is crucial if the press and public are to keep their First Amendment freedoms. A press seen as biased does little to earn that support.

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[13] Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon, and Miriam Wilkinson, "Newspaper Image and Evaluation," *Journalism Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 411-9.

[14] ASNE 1999 study, 6.

Because this study was limited in its comparisons to only those questions asked in the ASNE survey, not every dimension of perspective was explored. However, a few lines of inquiry might be worth a second look:

- The effect of "dumbed-down" articles. If readers view such writing as an insult to be suspicious of, rather than as a courtesy to a time-pressed audience, newspapers should be certain that their approach to telling the news is simple and clear without being simplistic.

- The importance of a staff that understands community issues. Hiring and keeping good journalists has never been easy, and it's even tougher in the dotcom age. Investing in recruitment and training, however, will not only result in a talented staff, but also may offer the added value of reducing the level of perceived bias by readers.

- The civic powerless feeling by 29 percent of readers. Perhaps the perception of bias can be lessened if newspapers create more effective links between reader opinion and government action.

- While 68 percent of the readers wanted interpretation along with the facts, 93 percent of the journalists wanted to give them that interpretation, indicating that the use of interpretative stories is fairly widespread, or at least the intent is widespread. However, in stories where the facts speak well enough for themselves, perhaps they should left alone to do just that.

- The public's opinion of journalists makes a difference in its perception of bias. If we change our image in the public's mind, can we lower its perception of bias? If so, what will it take: Fewer sensational stories? Taking less apparent glee in the downfall of public figures? More good news, less bad? Figuring out how to create stronger personal bonds between readers and reporters? Can the media afford to take those steps? Can they afford not to?

Beyond this study, other factors may carry greater weight on perceived bias. How frequently and thoroughly does the reader peruse the paper? Does bias perception grow as the reader spends more time and thought on the paper? How much do perceptions created by other media blend into the perception of a newspaper? For example, how easily can people who watched "Hard Copy" the night before separate their perception of that medium from their perception of the newspaper the next morning? How much do the opinions of friends matter? Does the media's talk of bias predispose people to look for bias?

It might also be interesting to track the "niceness" factor. If the comment by one focus group member is shared by others – "You wouldn't be a good reporter if you were a nice person" – perhaps the image of hard-bitten reporters translates into a perception of unfair and biased reporters.

This is not to suggest that bias exists only in the minds of readers. Clearly, the media have some questions to ask of their own perceptions of bias. Also, the ASNE survey may not be the best vehicle for this sort of study. Many of the questions that were compared against bias perception for this paper are cognitively consistent with bias, and therefore they may not reveal what truly triggers bias perception.

But communication is a two-way street, and even small steps toward understanding how the folks at the other end of the block reach their perceptions may prove helpful.

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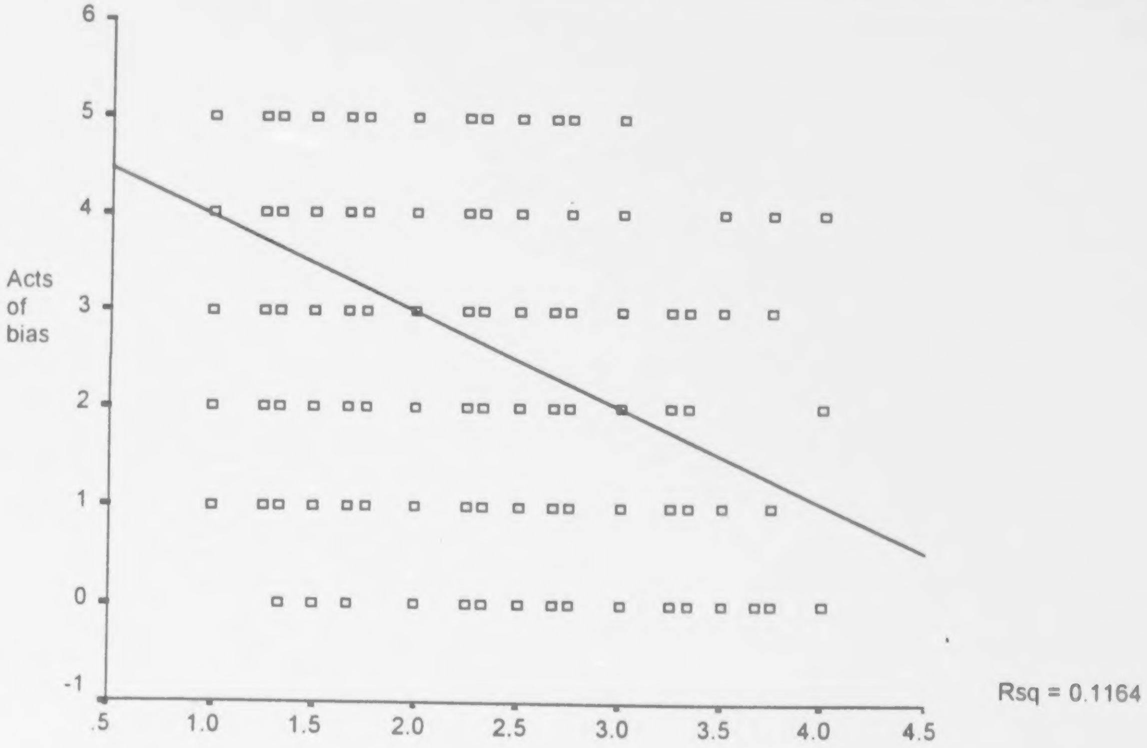

As opinion of journalists as individuals rises, perception of bias in the industry drops.

The individual-to-industry bias scale

Research Question No. 7

Newspaper

Online newspapers: Collating banner advertising with editorial content

by
David R. Thompson, Ph.D.
Loras College
and
Birgit Wassmuth, Ph.D.
Drake University

Paper presented at the annual
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Convention, August 9-12, 2000, Phoenix, Arizona

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Online newspapers: Collating banner advertising with editorial content

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ABSTRACT

More and more online newspapers are becoming self-sustaining profit centers. Effective online advertising is one element in the success of online ventures.

This paper reports a content analysis of online newspaper practice regarding delivering appropriate advertising messages to an audience by collating editorial content and banner ads. For example, a banner ad for ordering tickets to St. Louis Cardinals games may appear on the same "page" as a sports story about Mark McGwire's latest home run streak.

Four methods of targeting online ads to an audience are defined: registration, cookies (not a factor in this study), sponsorship, and targeting banner ads to online content. This is one of the first studies of online newspaper advertising that uses a systematic sample and examines levels of the site beyond the home page.

Results indicate only two instances of site sponsorship and one example of registration to enter the site.

Previous research supports the practice of matching banner ads to the pages on which they appear.

Coders were instructed to perform an information location task. For this pilot study, coders were told to search online newspaper sites for a classified ads for used BMWs. In principle, as the scope of a search for specific content narrows, an increasing percentage of banners targeted to content should be found.

In general, findings show a low level of ads related to content found on home pages of online newspapers. An increase in the percentage of banner ads targeted to page content occurs after the first, second and third clicks. Even then, only about half the banner ads are match page content.

An increase in percentage of banner ads targeted to page content peaks at the 3-click level. Sites that violate the "3-click rule" were not effective at targeting banner ads to page content at the fourth click and beyond.

The majority (87 percent) of newspaper sites coded did use banner ads. More than half (59 percent) of all "pages" viewed included at least one banner ad. Only 27 percent of banner ads were targeted to content. Most of the untargeted ads were found on home pages.

The authors believe the study reported here provides insight about one type of symbiotic relationship between editorial and advertising that may improve newspapers' online products.

Online newspapers: Collating banner advertising with editorial content

Preface

The authors recognize the traditional "tension" between Editorial and Advertising at newspapers. However, the authors believe that newspaper readers perceive "the newspaper" as an entity, not as the unfortunate juxtaposition of editorial content and advertising messages.

The researchers have approached this study of online newspaper practice with that in mind.

Many online newspapers place advertising on the home page. Most print newspapers still reject the idea of advertising on the front page.

Many print newspapers place ads targeted to a male audience in the sports section. Ads targeted to women may be found in the lifestyle section.

In some cases, the product may "match" the content of the page. For example, an ad for Goodyear tires may be found on the sports page that features news about motorsports.

This pilot study examines the extent to which online ads match online content.

To simplify the study — since different newspapers run different stories — the researchers chose to examine banner ads from newspaper home pages through a search task to find a specific product in the site's classifieds section.

Introduction

The purpose of this pilot study was to conduct a content analysis of the current practice of collating content of banner advertising and editorial content in online newspapers.

Personalization of online news may be enhanced by improved methods of matching, or "targeting," the content domains of ads and news items. For example, a banner ad for ordering tickets to St. Louis Cardinals games may appear on the same "page" as a sports story about Mark McGwire's latest home run streak.

Theoretically, this form of targeting online ads may result in a greater likelihood that the ad will be read. Click-through should increase. Effectiveness of the ad should be enhanced. And the newspaper will have found another way to improve the self-sustainability of its online product.

Literature Review

For the purpose of this pilot study, the researchers concentrated on literature related to online advertising and methods of targeting ads to online readers. They believe this literature represents general principles that will transfer across content areas, particularly this study on the relationship between advertising content and editorial content found in online newspapers.

The Internet is an attractive advertising market because, according to Robinson and Kaye (1997, p. 219):

> 1) the Internet is a global marketplace which delivers a vast and diverse audience to advertisers; 2) advertisers can tailor messages for certain groups of consumers by channeling ads through appropriate Web sites thus capturing a specialized viewing audience; 3) online advertisements are not constrained by time, space and deadlines as are print and electronic advertisements; 4) cyber ads are updated and changed much more quickly and easily than traditional media advertisements; 5) Web advertisements are inexpensive to produce and have long run time; and, 6) Web sites provide prestige and a competitive arena allowing many small businesses to compete with companies which have large print and television ad budgets."

Robinson and Kaye's points 2, 4 and 6 are related to targeting banner ads. Tailored messages delivered to targeted audiences may be accomplished by effective placement of ads on relevant online pages, or files. The instant publishing aspect of the Internet — with no wait for a printing deadline or air time for television programming — provide an opportunity for advertisers to respond quickly to social or world events, modify banner ads, and replace old banners with fresh ads targeted to updated content on the Internet. Small businesses, including newspapers with low circulation, may compete in a global marketplace — or at least a regional market — with the appearance of a high-dollar advertising budget.

Four methods of targeting online ads to an audience are considered in this literature review: registration, cookies, sponsorship, and targeting banners to online content (sometimes referred to as "placement").

The methodology used for this pilot study is content analysis. Audience measures are not included in this study. The sample used for this study is drawn from active online editions of daily, general interest newspapers in the United States.

(1) Registration

The first method of targeting ads to an online audience involves collecting demographic information from users. "Registration" is sometimes required before entering a site on the Internet. Often, a registration form appears on the first "page" of an online site. The form may include an option for registered users to enter a password for access to the site. Registration forms vary widely regarding information requested from online visitors. Once the online registration form is complete, the user submits the form to the host of the site, and entry to the site is permitted.

The content provider analyzes this demographic information. Then, informed decisions are made about how to target online advertising to this particular audience.

(2) Cookies

A second technique used to gather information about online users involves "cookies."

According to Robinson and Kaye (1997, p. 218), "Netscape's new 'cookies' tool is designed to download ads targeted at a specific consumer group. For instance, a woman over the age of forty can receive a different style of Levi's ad than a teenager accessing the same Web page."

Of course, Robinson and Kaye's example assumes that the two women are not using the same computer with the same browser software.

Cookies are placed on the user's computer by the information provider's server. Often this placement occurs without the user's knowledge. For this perceived invasion of privacy, cookies have come under close scrutiny.

Basically, a cookie collects information about the user, such as what sites he or she visits on the Internet. This information is relayed back to the server that placed the cookie. The information is analyzed and used to target ads to that individual user.

Theoretically, a cookie can identify a specific user and "automatically" deliver advertising that should appeal to that person. This means that a cookie cannot be effective until a user visits the same site a second time.

For this study, cookies are not a factor. Coders were instructed to use "first load" ads only. No sites were visited twice, so any cookies that may have been deposited on the coders' computers never had a chance to work.

(3) Sponsorship

A third form of targeting online advertising to an audience involves sponsorship of a site. For example, Air France may have chosen to sponsor the Web site for the 1998 World Cup soccer tournament. The World Cup games were played in France, so this would be an excellent opportunity to market event-related special fares on Air France.

Dreze, Xavier, and Zufryden, Fred (1997, p. 77) report three types of advertiser-supported sites:

> (1) sponsored content sites (e.g., The Los Angeles Times),
> (2) sponsored search agents and directories (e.g., Yahoo!), and
> (3) entry portal sites (e.g., Netscape). Here, advertisers, such as company sponsors, may insert "banner ads" in the latter publisher sites that provide links to company Web sites which may include advertising and sales information about company products.

For the purpose of this study, "sponsorship" is defined as evidence online that [this] site is sponsored by [this] company. For this content analysis, coders were instructed to look for the words "sponsored by."

"Sponsored content sites," according to Dreze, Xavier, and Zufryden, Fred (1997, p. 77), would be coded for this study as "this site uses banner ads."

For this study, sponsorship is defined as McDonald (1997, p. 27) describes:

> Advertisers who do not sell their products directly to consumers but who still want to find a way to participate in interactive media will revert to a model that prevailed in the early days of television: sponsorship. By sponsoring a site that consumers value, the advertiser will hope to build positive associations for the brand. The communication limitations of banners [namely, bandwidth (p. 25)] will be overcome by surrounding content with imagery related to the sponsoring brand.

Presumably, McDonald would agree that companies would sponsor sites that feature content that complements the products or services sold by those companies. For example, a local sporting goods store might sponsor online content related to football or baseball. Or a local sports bar might create an ad to promote its Monday Night Football specials.

(4) Targeting banner ads to content

The fourth type of targeting to an audience involves matching banner ads to content. Sometimes, this is referred to as "placement," meaning an ad is "placed" or put onto a content page.

Online researchers, however, sometimes refer to "placement" as "location of the ad on the page." Physical location of the ad on the page is not a variable here. This study does report whether or not banner ads are targeted or matched to the content of the page on which they appear.

To define banner ads for this paper, the researchers consulted the literature, where they found a variety of descriptions.

Bucy, Lang, Potter and Grabe (1998, pp. 11 and 15), use the term "banner" to indicate the online equivalent of a newspaper's nameplate. To them, a "banner ad" is an ad placed within the nameplate, as opposed to an ad placed within the "body of the Web site." This seems to be a rather unconventional definition.

Banner ads have been described as online billboards (Harvey 1997, p. 12) and as "the interactive equivalent of the roadside sign" (McDonald 1997, p. 25).

For the purpose of this study, the researchers have adopted a definition found online (Banner Design 1998, online) at http://www.whitepalm.com/fourcorners/definitions.html: A banner ad is "a graphic or image used for advertising on the Internet." This image is usually, still, a "gif" (Graphic Interchange Format) file. But other forms of ads, such as HTML-based banners have come into use.

Technically, a banner ad may be any size. However the Internet Advertising Bureau (Internet Advertising Bureau 1998. http://www.iab.net) promotes the use of its seven standard sizes: full banner (480 x 60 pixels); half banner (234 x 60); full banner with vertical navigation bar (392 x 72); vertical banner (120 x 240); square button (125 x 125); button #1 (120 x 90); button #2 (120 x 60); micro button (88 x 31).

This study does not investigate file format or size of banner ads.

Online advertisers have not yet developed a service that can keep up with the content and deadline demands of daily news content.

KRT Interactive, a service of Knight Ridder Tribune, advertises (KRT, 1998):

> Interactive news packages and KRT's exclusive QuickTime animations give your site superior content on breaking news and major stories. And because it comes from KRT, you know it is to the highest journalistic standards.

In the researchers' opinion, this is the ultimate in targeting to online news content. News happens, and interactive content is prepared immediately for online distribution.

The authors of this paper have not found an advertising service that specializes in preparing ads for use with breaking news.

For example, President Clinton's videotaped grand jury testimony about his "improper relationship" with Monica Lewinsky, among other things, was released to the public on Monday, September 21, 1998. On that videotape, Clinton repeatedly reached for a can of soda. It was a Coca-Cola product. In the researchers' opinion, if advertisers were prepared to respond online with an image ad for Pepsi within 24 hours, the effect could have been remarkable.

Because this study examines the opportunity of targeting within an information location process (i.e., a search for a classified ad for a specific product), the researchers examined literature concerning banner advertising in classifieds sites. One item was found.

In her comparison of display ads in print to online classifieds, Lainson (1998. online) states:

> I do read the local newspapers every day for the ads — the display ads. I only browse through the classifieds when I'm specifically looking for something such as a job, a car, a house, or a garage sale.
>
> I definitely think there is something to be said for local display ads being placed adjacent to news to capture the attention of the page flipper. But I don't think the strategy will work for classifieds. And even if it did, that's not how online classified advertising is being laid out — you need to click to visit the classifieds. Therefore, psychologically, it is very easy to separate a site's news function from its classified function.

Apparently, Lainson has not considered the possible advantages of finding a banner ad that is targeted to the focus of her classifieds search. The authors suspect that a robust effect may be found by showing her a banner ad that "matches" the goal or destination of her search. For example, the most effective placement of a banner ad for a local Ford dealership may be the point at which classified ads for used Fords appear.

Related to task completion, such as a search for a specific classified ad, Hays (Media Buying Tips, 1998. online) advises:

> Avoid having your banner included on web pages that lead a user through a process. If user is in the middle of filling out forms to finish a task, they are not likely to click on an ad banner.
>
> Marshall Hays, President
> Hays Internet Marketing

This would suggest that no banners should be placed between the classifieds index and the final page of the search. But how would the computer know when the search is complete?

In general, prior research supports matching content of a banner ad with content of the page on which the ad appears.

"Banner ads for product categories that are highly relevant to the content of the Web site where they appear generate more clicking," Cho (1998, p. 303) states.

Andrews (1996, online) advises: "Keep ads in context. Always try to make the ad match the content of the page it will display on."

Angwin (1996, online) states: "Experts agree that the most successful banners are related to the site where they appear — such as an ad for bonsai trees on a gardening Web page."

This relates to literature that argues for matching content of a banner ad to content on the page that has "immediate relevance of the message to the audience" (Briggs and Hollis, 1997, p. 43).

This study codes for "banner targeted to content."

Research Questions

In addition to checking for registration procedures and site sponsorship, the following four research questions were formed:

- **R1.** How many newspapers used banner ads at all?
- **R2.** Of all the "pages" viewed, how many included at least one banner ad?
- **R3.** How many of the banner ads seen were targeted to the content of the page on which they appear?
- **R4.** What is the breakdown of banners targeted to content by level of information hierarchy (location on the site, such as the home page, after the first click, after the second click, etc.)

Method

This pilot study collected data about targeting banner ads to the content of the "pages" on which they appear. See Appendix A for variables and coding options.

Content analysis was chosen because it is an appropriate methodology for collecting baseline data that demonstrate a specific advertising practice. Active online newspaper sites from across the United States were used for data collection.

Two coders were assigned an information location task: Find a classified ad for a BMW in the online newspapers selected for this content analysis.

An information location task that involves classified advertising is used because it allows the researchers to examine banner use on home pages, on classifieds index pages, and within all levels of the classifieds site.

Performing a search that progresses from general content (the home page) to more and more specific information (classifieds index, to automotive classifications, to classified ads for a specific product) provides a systematic method for examining targeting practices.

As a user navigates deeper into the site and moves closer to the goal of the information location task, an increasing percentage of banner ads targeted to content may be seen.

In other words, on the home page of an online daily newspaper, banner ads may not be targeted to "today's top stories." But when the automotive classifieds index is displayed, users should see a banner with content targeted to transportation (in general), for example. In this study, the task is: Find a classified ad for a BMW. Therefore, at the point when actual classified ads for BMWs appear, users should expect to see a banner targeted to that specific product, such as the name and phone number of the local BMW dealer.

Coders were instructed to code evidence of registration (yes; no) and site sponsorship (yes; no). Each banner ad, each "impression," encountered during this search task was coded for "banner targeted to content" (yes; no; can't tell).

For example, an ad for a Pontiac dealership would be coded as "no" on the home page, unless a headline for one of the top stories mentioned Pontiac (plant closing, new models released, etc.). The same Pontiac dealership ad would be coded "yes, targeted to page content" if it appeared in the automotive index of the classifieds site. And the same ad would be coded "no" if it appeared at the point BMW ads were listed.

Ads with ambiguous messages like "free stuff" or "loans" were coded as "no" on home pages and "can't tell" within the classifieds portion of the site.

After pre-testing four sites, the coding instrument was fine-tuned and finalized. Pretest data were not included in the data analysis.

All data were collected in one week during September 1998.

The coders used identical computers, browser software, and Internet connection: an Intergraph TD-22 computer (an IBM clone) with 48-MB RAM and Pentium II processor; an Intergraph 17sd69 monitor (17-inch color); Microsoft Internet Explorer 4 browser software; and a direct connection to a T-1 fiber optic line.

Sample

A systematic sample was obtained from *Editor & Publisher's* online listings of newspapers in the United States (http://www.mediainfo.com/emediajs). The site included 790 daily, general interest newspapers published in the United States. Weekly, business, and other special-interest newspapers were excluded from the sample.

Fifty sites were selected for coding by dividing 790 by 50, which is 16. A random numbers table was used to establish a starting point. From there, every 16th daily, general interest paper was selected for coding. Anticipating the possibility that some sites may not load properly, the researchers selected four back-up sites.

Time allowed more sites to be coded, after coding the original 54. So another 20 sites were selected using the same procedure. A random numbers table was used to select a new starting point. This time, every 39th site was selected.

For intercoder reliability, the researchers selected an additional seven sites, about 10 percent of the sample of 74 online newspapers (considered acceptable for the calculation of Scott's Pi). The same procedure was used to select these sites. For this sample of seven, every 113th daily, general interest newspaper site was selected.

This brings the total to 81 sites selected for coding: 54 from the first selection, 20 more sites, and seven additional sites used for both the data set and intercoder reliability. For a list of the newspapers selected for this study, see Appendix B.

Each researcher coded sites independently. One researcher looked at 35 sites. The other researcher looked at 39 sites.

To establish an intercoder reliability score, both researchers coded the same seven sites on the same day at approximately the same time (the same ads in the same issue of the same online newspaper). See Appendix A for intercoder reliability scores.

Exclusions: Three newspaper sites were no longer online and could not be coded. One newspaper required paid subscription for entry into the site. It was not coded. One site was not coded because it was "under construction." One other site was excluded from the data set because of bad data caused by failure of large portions of the site to load. The site loaded text, but all the images were seen as "broken" gifs. Therefore, it could not be determined whether or not the site included banner ads.

Usable data were gathered from 75 online newspapers.

Results And Findings

This ground-breaking pilot study attempted to assess the practice of targeting banner ads in online newspapers and provides baseline data for future studies on Internet advertising. Results have been reported with descriptive statistics.

This study coded 75 online newspapers using content analysis. The total number of "pages," or files accessed, was 280. An average of 3.73 pages per online newspaper was found. The total number of banner ads coded was 449.

R1. How many newspapers used banner ads at all?

Of the 75 online newspapers coded: 65 (87 percent) used banner ads; no classified ads were found on five (7 percent); and two (3 percent) had neither banner ads nor classifieds.

R2. Of all the "pages" viewed, how many included at least one banner ad?

Of the 280 pages coded: 166 (59 percent) included at least one banner ad; 112 (40 percent) had no banner ads; and 2 (1 percent) ads failed to load onto the page.

Fifty-seven (76 percent) of the home pages coded did include at least one banner ad.

Four targeting strategies were covered in the literature review. The use of "cookies" was excluded from this study. Registration for entry to the site, sponsorship of the site, and targeting banner ads to the pages on which they appear were coded.

Only one of the 75 online newspapers required registration for access to content: The New York Times (http://www.nyt.com). This site does place a cookie. So on subsequent visits to the site, the user should be "recognized" and allowed full access.

Evidence of sponsorship was found on two of the 75 sites.

R3. How many of the banner ads seen were targeted to the content of the page on which they appear?

Of the 449 banner ads, 122 (27.2 percent) were targeted to content; 314 (69.9 percent were not targeted to content; and 13 (2.9 percent) were coded as "can't tell." See Figure 1 (page 20).

FIGURE 1 GOES HERE

Two hundred thirty-seven (52.8 percent) banner ads were seen on home pages, one of which did not load. Of the 237 banner ads found on home pages, 214 (90 percent) were not targeted to page content.

The researchers believe this is an important finding. Advertising departments at these online newspapers are not matching banner ad content to page content in an effective manner.

R4. What is the breakdown of banners targeted to content by level of information hierarchy (location on the site, such as the home page, after the first click, after the second click, etc.)?

Table 1 and Figure 2 show data related to this research question (See page 21.).

TABLE 1 GOES HERE

FIGURE 2 GOES HERE

The evidence shows an extremely low level of banner ads targeted to content on home pages and an overall increase in the percentage of banners targeted to page content after the first, second and third clicks. Targeting peaks at the third click.

The third click is the point at which many of searches for BMW classified ads were completed. Although not defined as "the 3-click rule," common practice and one study in particular mention this principle of effective site mapping, or "story-boarding" the information hierarchy of a well-structured Web site.

Robinson and Kaye (1997, p. 221) state: "Users should be able to easily navigate a Web site. All pages should link back to the home page and content should never be more than three clicks away."

Discussion

Effective targeting practice for this information location task (finding a classified ad for a BMW in an online newspaper) would suggest that banner ads become increasingly targeted to the content of the pages on which they appear as the search progresses. The closer to the goal of the search for the ad, the more narrowed the search becomes. Banner ads may be expected to do the same: The "deeper" into the site they appear, the higher the percentage of banner ads targeted to the content of the page.

The evidence of this pilot study shows a low level of collating, or matching, banner ads to content with home pages and an overall increase in the percentage of banners targeted to page content after the first, second and third clicks.

But, only one banner ad related to BMW (a BMW dealership) was found at the point where classified ads for BMWs were displayed. It was found after the third click.

The fact that targeting banner ad content to page content dramatically drops after the third click is not surprising. According to Robinson and Kaye's (1997, p. 221) recommendation, sites that force readers past the third-click level are more difficult to navigate. In general, these sites are poorly organized.

One example that stands out was an ad for a Pontiac dealership that appeared after the sixth click — the point at which the search task was complete. In the authors' opinion, someone who is so highly motivated to find BMWs in online classified ads is not likely to be persuaded to buy a new Pontiac, no matter how exciting the ad.

Is this poor targeting or good guerrilla placement by Pontiac? Future experimental studies will examine this issue.

Aside from apathy and ignorance, one possible reason for designing a site that ignores the 3-click rule involves click-through measurement. In an information location task, such as the search for a BMW classified ad, users are motivated to find their goals. In principle, they should continue to click-through until the goal has been reached. Poor site design is one way to inflate click-through rates.

On the other hand, adding "extraneous" levels to the information hierarchy to boost click-through provides the opportunity to place more ads.

According to the trend reported in this pilot study, the percentage of banner ads collated with page content should continue to rise. Few banner ads were found after the fourth, fifth and sixth clicks. Had they been targeted effectively to page content, a 100 percent of ads targeted to content could have been achieved with relative ease. Therefore, online newspapers that designed their classifieds sites to force users beyond three clicks were ineffective at both taking advantage of the opportunity to place a greater number of ads and targeting banner ad content to page content.

The researchers believe this is an important finding.

Banners on the home page of an online newspaper are not targeted well to the content of the "front page." At the time of this study, the authors found no evidence of effective advertising procedures in place for responding to the daily news routine. In other words, advertising departments at newspapers may not be prepared to keep up with content that updates rather frequently.

Targeted banner ads found at the first, second and third clicks show a relatively flat line. According to these findings, classified advertising sites of online newspapers (which may be operated in-house or by third-party vendors such as AdQuest and AdOne) do not even cross the 60 percent line for targeted to content.

Some of these targeted banners were house ads, promotions for the newspaper. House ads were coded as banners. Teasers to "inside" content sometimes looked like banner ads. They were not coded.

By the way, of the 75 sites coded, only one BMW banner ad appeared on a page that displayed BMW classified ads.

Wassmuth and Thompson (1999) have reported a trend that indicates the percentage of banner ads that contain specific content increases at deeper levels of the information hierarchy. By linking the findings of their study of banner ad content to this pilot study of targeting banners to page content, the researchers suggest the following: As banner messages become more specific after two or three clicks, the percentage of banner ads targeted to the content of the page on which they appear increases.

In the researchers' opinion, this is an important finding that indicates room for improvement in targeting practices of online advertising by newspapers and, in some cases, their third-party classified advertising services.

One possible reason for this lack of targeting performance may be related to the fact that few online newspapers are collecting information about their readers. Only one site required registration by users before entering the site: The New York Times.

And no ad viewed during the coding session for the New York Times was targeted to the content of the page. Three banners were seen on the home page, none after the first click, one after a second click, one after a third click and one after a fourth click. Not one of these banner ads was targeted to the content of the page.

This study did not evaluate the performance of "cookies." If the coder had returned to the New York Times site for a second visit, the cookie should have assisted the host (the newspaper) in targeting ads to the client (the coder's computer).

But the success of a cookie depends on the identity of the user. If one person registers but another person later accesses that site from the same computer (assuming login with the same profile), then the second person would see ads targeted to the "wrong" person.

The same problem would occur when personalized news is read by a different online reader.

Site sponsorship was found on only two of the 75 newspaper sites examined. Perhaps newspaper publishers resist the concept of site sponsorship.

Perhaps resistance from the newsroom is part of the answer. The authors suspect editors would be reluctant to invite site sponsorship because of the possibility that the sponsor may try to exert pressure to control content to some degree. This calls up major questions of ethics, credibility and accountability.

More likely, the researchers suspect, newspaper advertising departments have not developed programs for promoting and implementing sponsorship.

In general, the current practice by online newspapers of targeting banner ads appears to be relatively weak. Techniques used for targeting ads to an online audience — registration, site sponsorship, and targeting banners to surrounding content — are underutilized, according to these findings.

Limitations Of This Study and Recommendations For Future Research

An information location task was used in this pilot study as a way to examine online newspaper advertising beyond the home page. The researchers believe this is a strength of this research and a meaningful contribution to the literature.

However, this approach did not allow coding of "section" content, such as news, sports, and entertainment. Future research will examine those content areas.

Determining the effectiveness of sites that use a registration procedure to deliver targeted ads targeted to users on subsequent visits is beyond the scope of this study. This pilot study coded "first visit" only. Research designs that include repeated visits to a site may be used in future studies.

The low level of site sponsorship may be related to the methodology used for this study, current practices by newspapers and their advertisers, or both. This study was limited to home page and classifieds. Future studies that access editorial sections of online newspapers may reveal a greater degree of sponsorship.

The authors believe qualitative research is needed that examines newspaper advertising department practices, procedures and policies for online ads. Of particular interest to the authors would be examination of the interactions between the advertising and editorial departments.

The literature review for this study supported the concept of targeting banners to the content of the page on which they appear.

Evidence revealed by this pilot study shows weak support of this concept.

For home pages of online newspapers, banner ads were not targeted well to page content. The percentage of targeted ads increased after the first, second and third clicks. But, even then, only about half (50 percent after the first click; 49 percent after the second click, and 56 percent after the third click) of the banner ads were targeted to page content.

Extending the findings of their study of banner ad content to this pilot study of targeting banners to page content, the researchers suggest: As banner messages become more specific after two or three clicks, the percentage of banner ads targeted to the content of the page on which they appear increases.

For example, a newspaper's home page may have a sampling of the day's content and no banner ad that matches any of that content. A click on the International section, however, might lead to a page on which a banner ad for Delta Airlines international service. If a story about France is accessed next, the reader might expect to see a more specific ad for Delta's schedule and ticketing for flights to Paris.

Future research will test this relationship between specificity of banner ad content and targeting banners to content of the pages on which they appear.

Of course, the question must be asked: Is there a need to develop systems for matching content of page to content of banner ad?

Why not simply target the ad to the user? For this study, "personalization" of news was not a factor. This pilot study did not evaluate the relationship between the newspaper site and individual users.

The researchers discovered some teasers to "inside" content that looked like banner ads. Teasers were not coded. Sometimes banner ads were interlaced with teasers. The practices of creating teasers that look like banners and placing teasers among advertising blurs the distinction between editorial and advertising.

Is this good for click-through? Or does this train users in ad avoidance and, possibly, editorial avoidance? More research is needed on the identifiable or characteristic features of banner ads, particularly as related to the formal features of editorial content.

As with many pilot studies, sample size used was relatively low. Eighty-one of the almost 800 daily, general interest newspapers found on the *Editor & Publisher* Web site were selected. This seemingly low sample size, combined with the fact that the number of ads diminished after the third click, affected the statistics that could be run. Researchers should consider larger sample sizes for future studies of this kind in order to obtain higher numbers per cell (for a Chi Square analysis, for example).

The researchers recommend involving more than two coders for studies of this kind. Only two coders participated in this content analysis.

The researchers chose not to select a stratified sample of newspapers by circulation, an indication of the relative size of the organization. In their opinion, the Internet puts all content providers on "equal footing," at least in terms of the potential to be perceived as top-notch organizations. However, a stratified sample may be considered for future research.

Because the Internet makes all electronic publications "global," geographic representation was considered but rejected by the researchers for this study.

As is the nature of a pilot study, the researchers worked with a new coding instrument. The researchers are refining their measurement tool for content analysis of online newspaper content.

Unlike studies of home pages, which tend to examine a higher number of ads, this pilot study looked at ads on every level of the information hierarchy. Successive levels were examined as the coder completed a specific search task.

When the statistics printed, the researchers were thrilled to see a relatively large number of "p<.001" levels reported. However, scrutiny of the cell sizes used to determine those results prevented the researchers from reporting such robust findings.

The low number of ads found at some of the deeper levels of the site caused the problem. Some cells of the analysis were too small (N<5) to run inferential tests properly. This rendered Chi Squares and correlations powerless.

Therefore, only descriptive statistics have been reported.

Conclusion

This paper reports a content analysis of current online newspaper practice regarding targeting banner ads to an audience through the use of site registration, cookies (not a factor is this study), sponsorship, and matching, or collating, banner ads to page content.

Unlike much of the previous research of online advertising, this pilot study did not sample "Top 50" sites. Usually, such Top 50 lists are made up of a hodgepodge of sites that represent a variety of content domains. This is one of the first studies of online newspaper advertising based on a systematic sample.

Findings of this pilot study indicate only two instances of site sponsorship and one example of registration to enter the site.

Findings show an extremely low level of targeted ads on home pages of online newspapers. An increase in the percentage of banner ads targeted to page content occurs after the first, second and third clicks. But even then, only about half the banners are targeted to page content.

Coders were assigned an information location task (find a classified ad for a BMW) and instructed to code each banner ad encountered during the search. The increase in percentage of banners targeted to page content peaks at the 3-click level, where many of the searches were completed.

Sites that violated the "3-click rule" were not effective at targeting banner ads to page content at the fourth click and beyond.

The majority (87 percent) of newspaper sites coded did use banner ads. The majority (59 percent) of "pages" viewed included at least one banner ad. Overall, only 27 percent of banner ads were targeted to content. A high number of untargeted banners were found on home pages.

More and more online newspapers are becoming self-sustaining profit centers. The authors believe the study reported here provides insight about one type of symbiotic relationship between editorial content and advertising content that may improve newspapers' online products.

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Figure 1. Number of banner ads targeted to content
Note: Of the 314 banners not targeted to content, 214 appeared on home pages

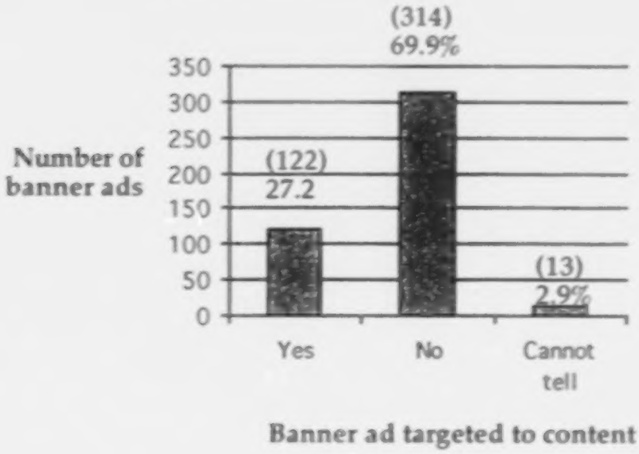

Figure 2. Percentage of banner ads targeted to content by level of information hierarchy

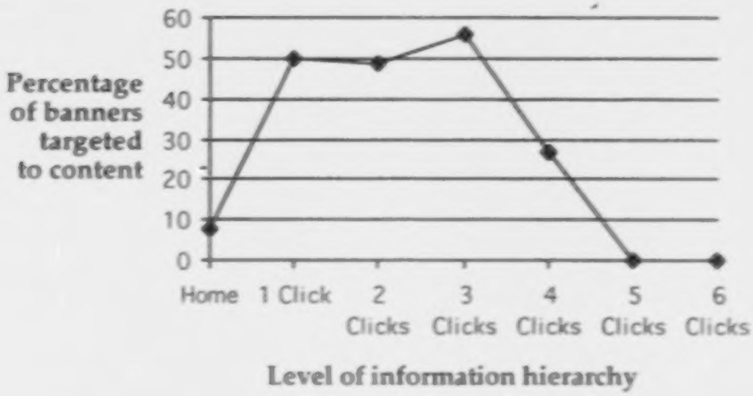

Table 1. Banner content matches, or is collated with, editorial content by level of information hierarchy
Note: The ad that "did not load" is not included in the total number of ads.

	Yes	No	Cannot Tell	Did Not Load	Total
Home	**20** **8.4%**	**214** **90.3%**	**3** **1.0%**	**[1]** **<1.0%**	**237**
1 Click	**43** **50.0%**	**40** **46.0%**	**3** **3.0%**	**0**	**86**
2 Clicks	**32** **49.0%**	**30** **46.0%**	**3** **1.0%**	**0**	**65**
3 Clicks	**24** **56.0%**	**18** **42.0%**	**1** **<1.0%**	**0**	**43**
4 Clicks	**3** **27.0%**	**8** **73.0%**	**0**	**0**	**11**
5 Clicks	**0**	**2** **40.0%**	**3** **60.0%**	**0**	**5**
6 Clicks	**0**	**2** **100%**	**0**	**0**	**2**
Total	**122**	**314**	**13**	**[1]**	**449**

APPENDIX A

Intercoder Reliability and Variables

To establish a measure of intercoder reliability, an additional seven sites (10 percent) of the original sample were coded by both researchers.

The same ads on the same edition of the same online newspaper were coded independently by each researcher.

Completed coding sheets were given to an independent researcher who tallied agreement and computed Scott's Pi Index scores for each variable.

Scott's Pi was used because it accounts not only for agreement but for probability of disagreement. The minimum level of acceptability for Scott's Pi is π=.75.

Use of Scott's Pi requires reporting level of agreement for each variable. No overall "percent of agreement" is provided. See Table 2, below.

The formula for Scott's Pi is:

$$\pi = \frac{\%\text{ of agreement} - \%\text{ expected}}{1 - \%\text{ expected}}$$

Where % agreement = total agreed upon ÷ total possible to agree upon
and
Where % expected = 1 ÷ total number of levels within that variable

Table 2. Variables, coding options and intercoder reliability scores

Variable	Coding Options	Scott's Pi	N	Disagree
Registration	yes; no	1.00	7	0
Sponsorship	yes; no	1.00	7	0
Banner targeted to content	yes; no; can't tell	0.79	44	6
Banner(s) on home page	yes; no	1.00	7	0
Site has classifieds	yes; no	1.00	7	0
Banner(s) in classifieds	yes; no	0.70	7	1
Host of classifieds*	in-house; third party; can't tell	1.00	7	0

*Host of classifieds indicates a classifieds site maintained either in-house or by a third-party service, such as AdOne or Ad Quest. Host of classifieds was not analyzed for this study.

Another variable, circulation was not analyzed for this paper. The researchers used the Newspaper Association of America's 1997 categories for circulation size (NAA 1997):

0-25,000
25,001-50,000
50,001-100,000
100,001-200,000
200,001-400,000
400,001+

APPENDIX B

Newspapers coded for this study

Ridgecrest Daily Independent
(The Daily Independent)
Ridgecrest, California
www.ridgecrest.com

Tracy Press
(TracyPress.com)
Tracy, California
www.tracypress.com

Glenwood Post
Glenwood Springs, Colorado
www.glenwoodpost.com

Hartford Courant
Hartford, Connecticut
www.courant.com
[images did not load; bad data; excluded from analysis]

Bradenton Herald
Bradenton, Florida
www.bradenton.com

Naples Daily News
Naples, Florida
www.naplesnews.com

Tampa Tribune
Tampa, Florida
www.tampatrib.com

Garden Island
(The Garden Island)
Lihue, Hawaii
planet-hawaii.com/gardenisland

Belvidere Daily Republican
Belvidere, Illinois
[No longer online]

Mattoon Journal Gazette
Mattoon, Illinois
www.thetimesonline.com

Elkhart Truth
Elkhart, Indiana
www.elktruth.com

Michigan City News Dispatch
(Michigan City, Indiana)
www.michigancity.com

Des Moines Register
Des Moines, Iowa
www.dmregister.com

Hays Daily News
Hays, Kansas
elvis.dailynews.net/hays

Elizabethtown News-Enterprise
Elizabethtown, Kentucky
www.newsenterpriseonline.com

Natchitoches Times
Natchitoches, Louisiana
[No longer online]

Baltimore Sun
Baltimore, Maryland
www.sunspot.net

Lowell Sun
Lowell, Massachusetts
www.newschoice.com/newspapers.Lowell/sun/default.asp

Flint Journal
Flint, Michigan
fl.mlive.com/index.com/index.html

Sturgis Journal
Sturgis, Michigan
www.sturgisjournal.com

Winona Daily News
Winona, Minnesota
www.winonanet.com

Southeast Missourian
Cape Girardeau, Missouri
www.semissourian.com/main.html

Las Vegas Review-Journal
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.lvrj.com

Bridgewater Courier-News
Bridgewater, New Jersey
www.injersey.com/c-n

Los Alamos Monitor
Los Alamos, New Mexico
www.rt66.com/lamonitr

Kingston Daily Freeman
Kingston, New York
www.mhrcc.org/kgnfree.html

Wall Street Journal
New York City
[paid subscription; excluded from study]

Raleigh News & Observer
Raleigh, North Carolina
news-observer.com

Cincinnati Enquirer
Cincinnati, Ohio
enquirer.com/today

Springfield News-Sun
Springfield, Ohio
www.activedayton.com/SNS

Lawton Constitution
Lawton, Oklahoma
www.lawton-constitution.com

La Grande Observer
La Grande, Oregon
[under construction]

Erie Morning News
Erie, Pennsylvania
www.timesnews.com

Philadelphia Daily News
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
www.phillynews.com

West Chester Daily Local News
West Chester, Pennsylvania
www.dailylocal.com

Spartanburg Herald-Journal
Spartanburg, South Carolina
www.shj.com

Memphis Commerical Appeal
Memphis, Tennessee
www.gomemphis.com

Denton Record-Chronicle
Denton, Texas
www.denton.com

Odessa American
Odessa, Texas
www.oaoa.com

Ogden Standard-Examiner
Ogden, Utah
www.standard.net

Potomac News
Woodbridge, Virginia
www.potomacnews.com

Seattle Times
Seattle, Washington
www.seattletimes.com

Martinsburg Journal
Martinsburg, West Virginia
[No longer online]

Marshfield News-Herald
Marshfield, Wisconsin
www.oweb.com/News-Herald

Arizona Republic
Phoenix, Arizona
www.azcentral.com

Springdale-Rogers Morning News
Springdale, Arkansas
www.mornews.com

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin
Ontario, California
www.dailybulletin.com

Riverside Press-Enterprise
Riverside, Calif.
www.pe.net

Summit Daily News
Frisco, Colo.
www.summitdaily.com

Washington Times
Washington, DC
www.washtimes.com

Palm Beach Daily News
Palm Beach, Fla.
www.gopbi.com

LaGrange Daily News
LaGrange, Ga.
www.lagrangenews.com

Aurora Beacon News
(The Beacon News)
Aurora, Illinois
www.copleynewspapers.com/BeaconNews/index.html

Quincy Herald-Whig
Quincy, Illinois
www.whig.com

Huntington Herald-Press
Huntington, Indiana
www.h-ponline.com

Cedar Rapids Gazette
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
www.gazetteonline.com

Newton Kansan
Newton, Kansas
thekansan.com

Baton Rouge Advocate
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
www.theadvocate.com

Carroll County Times
Westminister, Maryland
www.carrollcounty.com

Salem Evening News
Salem, Massachusetts
www.salemnews.com

Monroe Evening News
Monroe, Michigan
www.monroenews.com

Biloxi-Gulfport Sun Herald
Gulfport, Mississippi
www.sunherald.com
[failed at third click; did not see classifieds; did use for analysis]

Kalispell Daily Inter Lake
Kalispell, Montana
www.dailyinterlake.com

Nashua Telegraph
Hudson, New Hampshire
www.nashuatelegraph.com

Roswell Daily Record
Roswell, New Mexico
roswell-record.com

New York Times
New York City
www.nyt.com

Greensboro News & Record
Greensboro, North Carolina
www.greensboro.com

Cincinnati Post
Cincinnati, Ohio
www.cincypost.com

Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise
Bartlesville, Oklahoma
www.e-enterprise.com

Bend Bulletin
Bend, Oregon
www.bendbulletin.com

Gettysburg Times
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
www.gburgtimes.com

Pottsville Republican & Evening Herald
Pottsville, Pennsylvania
www.pottsville.com

Greenville News
Greenville, South Carolina
www.greenvilleonline.com

Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
Murfreesboro, Tennessee
www.dnj.com

Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago, Illinois
www.suntimes.com/index

Olathe Daily News
Olathe, Kansas
www.joconews.com

Jersey Journal (New Jersey Online)
Jersey City, New Jersey
www.nj.com

The Columbus Dispatch
Columbus, Ohio
www.dispatch.com/default.html

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
www.leadertelegram.com

Huntsville Times
Huntsville, Alabama
www.al.com

Biddeford Journal
Biddeford, Maine
www.journaltribune.com

INFORMATION AND INTERACTION:

Online newspaper coverage of the 2000 Iowa caucus

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INFORMATION AND INTERACTION:
Online newspaper coverage of the 2000 Iowa caucus

ABSTRACT

By the time of the 2000 Iowa caucus, there were an estimated 70 million active Internet users in the United States alone, at least 5,000 Web sites devoted to U.S. politics-- and five Iowa newspapers willing to tackle the challenges of providing online coverage of an event that, in a more traditional media world, had been "their" big story. This exploratory study examines these papers' efforts to use the attributes of the online medium to go beyond "shovelware." In particular, it focuses on their use of interactive elements to investigate opportunities to serve new roles. The findings indicate that local newspapers are experimenting with a variety of options, including political discussion forums. But their efforts so far seem to be attracting only limited interest among audience members.

INFORMATION AND INTERACTION:
Online newspaper coverage of the 2000 Iowa caucus

The bands have been struck up again, the red, white and blue bunting has been unfurled, and the boys (and girls, too) on the bus are back: Another presidential election year is upon us. But among the familiar sights and sounds and stories, brought to us mainly through the familiar dedication of news holes and airtime to the candidates and campaigns, there is something different this time around. A medium that had not yet achieved critical mass in 1996 now has, and both the conduct and coverage of politics has taken to the World Wide Web in a major way. Thousands of political sites are available online, from candidates, political organizations and political junkies; there are so many that specialty search engines, such as politicalinformation.com, have been established to help users find and sort through them. Major media organizations, such as CNN/*Time* magazine and the *Washington Post*, have created massive sections devoted to the 2000 election. Others are scrambling to form partnerships, such as one between *The New York Times* and ABC News (Shepard, 2000), to help them do the same.

Flying somewhere below this national radar, though, are the majority of U.S. newspapers -- the local and regional ones, almost all of which are also online and also pondering how to cover the campaign effectively in this new medium. Each week in late winter and into the spring, as the primary calendar and the accompanying political bandwagon rolled through their state, a national story became a local one for these papers. This year, in many cases for the first time, they had to figure out how the Web fit into their coverage equation: What, if anything, could or should they do online that they were not doing in print?

The first newspapers to have to wrestle with that issue were the ones in Iowa, site of the nation's first caucus and the official kickoff to the presidential campaign. Although most of the state's dailies are now online, the majority did not offer special caucus sections this year; instead, they simply took local political stories from their print product and folded them into their regular online news sections. But five Iowa newspapers went further. As early as last fall or even late summer, they established sections of their sites devoted to political or caucus coverage. Their challenge then became figuring out how to take advantage of the medium's attributes to offer users more than plain "shovelware," stories taken from the print product and shoveled online with few or no changes.

All of them met the challenge, but in different ways. This exploratory study looks at what they did and what they learned from the experience, as well as online editors' perceptions about their role and that of their newspapers in this new medium. In particular, it focuses on their approaches to the medium's capacity for interaction, a capacity that some observers have regarded as of potentially fundamental importance for reinvigorating citizen engagement in democracy. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1) What features did Iowa newspapers offer in their online coverage of the 2000 caucus that differed from features available in print? In particular, to what extent did they make use of the medium's interactive capabilities?
2) What did the people responsible for these newspapers' caucus sites see as their role online, and how well did they consider that role to have been fulfilled this time around?

THE POLITICAL WEB

In the 1990s, the powerful media lock on political information became progressively looser. At the same time as presidential campaigning headed in directions that were in some ways evocative of the populist appeals of the 19th century (see Schudson, 1998), expanded opportunities both to gather information and to share views with other citizens led to an outburst of speculation that democracy itself was about to be transformed into something more closely resembling government truly of, by and for the people. In 1992, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot found ways to bypass journalists and reach voters through media forms such as TV entertainment or talk shows. Although such approaches suggest ways to restore the ordinary citizen to a central and active role in public political discussion, critics have pointed out that such populism is simplistic rather than even remotely deliberative. Politics once again becomes spectacle and theater, and "all too often populist programs degenerate into bear pits" (Blumler, 1997, p. 402). And while studies have offered mixed results, it does not seem that watching such programming contributes to either increased knowledge about candidates' stands on substantive issues or to an increased intention to actually vote in an election (Weaver and Drew, 1995).

In 1996, Usenet groups provided places for people to talk about politics, though they were used mainly by political activists in ways similar to traditional interpersonal groups (Hill and Hughes, 1997). Political Web sites also were available, but they too served primarily as a cost-effective communications tool for party activists, as the faithful in local and regional organizations went online to get information and advertising materials to take into their precincts (Davis, 1999; Hall, 1997). Among voters in general, 27 percent said they had access to online services in the fall of 1996, but only 6 percent said they ever visited any politically oriented Web sites, and fewer than 1 percent cited the Internet as the medium they relied on most ("New Media," 1996). Overall, nontraditional media seemed to have a greater influence on candidate image than on political knowledge in 1996 (Johnson, Braima and Sothirajah, 1999).

The interactive capabilities of the medium have drawn even more interest and speculation than its utility as an information source. Some see the Web as a means of reinvigorating community involvement in general and political involvement in particular -- in effect, of offering an electronic version of the "public sphere" envisioned by Habermas, a computer-based construction of a place where public opinion can be formed through communication among individuals who come together to create a public (see Habermas, 1991). Indeed, the value of association for effective democracy has long been recognized as a counterforce to what Tocqueville saw as the tendency toward "excessive individualism." Associations reinforce democracy by providing education in political participation and by serving as political forces in their own right. Throw the Internet into the mix -- with its freedom from constraints of space and time and the flexibility it can bring to grassroots movements -- and the possibility emerges for stronger, larger and easier associations for potential citizen empowerment (Klein, 1999).

The democratic potential of the Internet is great. The medium is, by its nature, a facilitator of fast communication not just from traditional sources but among citizens. Its inherent interactivity, potential for lateral communication, lack of a hierarchy, relatively low costs (once the hardware has been obtained) and speed all contribute to what could be a "new frontier of direct democracy" (Barber, Mattson and Peterson, 1997). In fact, some see in the spread of the Internet the rise of an "electronic republic" that can redefine traditional roles of both citizenship and public leadership. Telecommunications technologies are breaking down barriers of time and distance that have precluded citizen interaction, making it possible for millions of "widely dispersed citizens to receive the information they need to carry out the business of government themselves, gain admission to the political realm and retrieve at least some of the power over their own lives and goods that many believe their elected leaders are squandering" (Grossman, 1995, p. 6).

In the process, the role of the traditional media has been opened up to new challenges. Media that have been in the business of providing a predominantly one-way flow of information must now contend with a two-way flow that, at least potentially, makes audience members active participants in the communication process. Interactive media connect them not only to sources but to one another in ways that may drastically affect the relative importance of, for instance, the local newspaper in the formation of political sensibilities. So the so-called "political-media complex" is being challenged by cyber politics, which Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) suggest could develop significantly in at least three directions in the near future: as a campaign medium in its own right, supplementing if not displacing more traditional ones; as an important vehicle of interest group solidification and mobilization; and as a means for political enthusiasts to connect to a broader range of issues and perspectives than traditional media afford. "At the very least," says one political researcher, "the Net appears likely to decrease the influence of established media organizations over formation of the political agenda" (Bimber, 1998).

Or so goes the theory. The reality has been rather different, as described briefly above. Neither the traditional consumers nor the traditional producers of media messages have been especially quick to embrace their newly interchangeable roles. Aside from the Usenet groups already mentioned, other examples of widespread use of the Internet to express political opinions or engage in political discussions are relatively scarce. For instance, Bimber (1999) found that changes in the nature of citizen communication with government due to the Internet have been incremental rather than revolutionary; demographic factors such as education, age and gender seem more important in determining how active citizens are than does their use of the Internet independent of such factors.

As the 2000 campaign began, some observers were predicting that **this** would be the year the Internet comes of age in the political arena (Bowen, 1999). The U.S. online audience has become enormous; usage figures indicate close to 80 million Americans now are online at least once in any given month ("Media Metrix," 2000). According to early indications, not only are the raw numbers of Internet users growing but the importance of the Internet as a source for campaign news also is significantly up over 1996. Among those who go online, 12 percent now report that the Internet is their primary source for campaign news. Moreover, those who go online for campaign news are as knowledgeable about the candidates and their backgrounds as regular newspaper readers; 40 percent of respondents to a January 2000 survey rated as high on the knowledge scale, trailing only those who rely most heavily on news magazines or public television ("Tough Job," 2000).

But others are reiterating that while the promise of the Internet is great, it is still early days, with the technology too clunky and the sites too often more tedious than enlightening. "Somewhere down the line it offers us the possibility of power returning to the public in the way the Greeks originally imagined a democracy back in the days when the entire electorate could gather together to debate in the agora," one observer has written. But not yet. "Politicians are too wary of unrehearsed venues, and the public has lost the notion of the town hall meeting as anything but a televised spectacle" (Weise, 2000, 37-39).

THE NEWSPAPERS' ROLE

Newspapers also have struggled with the transition from their role as a "guardians of what comes into the public sphere" to builders of a virtual commons where people can talk about what they like. They recognize that technology offers new tools for igniting civic discussions and bringing people together (Lasica, 1996). But in the chaos of the Web's early years, it has been hard to know where to focus energies and resources. As they moved online over the course of the 1990s, newspapers experimented tentatively with ways to deal with aspects of the new medium that presented challenges they have not had to face in their more traditional formats.

While some journalists have approached the changes enthusiastically, many have not, citing among their concerns the fears that online media will be elitist rather than democratizing, forces of alienation rather than community-building (Singer, 1997). As recently as 1998, uses of interactive features by online newspapers were relatively few and token in nature, with smaller papers particularly reluctant to offer such features as discussion forums or chat rooms (Schultz, 1999). Not surprisingly, the larger the paper, the more likely it was to explore interactive features of the Web, though overall, most papers in the late 1990s were not providing such meaningful forms of interactivity to facilitate the discussion of public issues (Tankard and Ban, 1998).[1]

While online editors recognize interactivity as the medium's distinguishing feature, they also point to problems with discussion groups, in particular. These tend to be dominated by a fairly small number of sometimes-obstreperous users, and they typically are not seen as a good mesh with the newspaper's overall role as a provider of reliable information. Moreover, they can be a huge drain on staff time and energy. "It was an enormous resource question," said Chris Ma, the online editor of the *Washington Post*, a newspaper that has gone back and forth in its decision about whether to offer discussion boards at all. "We don't want to be a common carrier for anybody who wants to say anything" (Perlman, 1999).

However, things may be changing as newspapers wrestle with their online role in a highly competitive environment. There is some evidence that while interactivity may not yet be central to their online sites, they are offering a growing range of new services that are not a part of their print products, from searchable archives and hyperlinks to, increasingly, such interactive features as forums and chat rooms (see Peng, Tham and Xiaoming, 1999). The need for interactivity in a variety of forms was highlighted at this year's aptly named Interactive Newspapers Conference. Not the least of the incentives for change was provided by representatives of a generation of users whom publishers fear they are losing to computers anyway. A panel of students from Tulane and Loyola universities not only cited e-mail as their "killer app" but also expressed a desire for sites with "action," content that can be personalized, facilitated communication with other users and other things that go well beyond reading articles on a computer screen (Underage Web Habits, 2000; see also Outing, 2000). In the political realm, newspapers are well aware that the medium is a potential threat to their role as "middleman" between voters and politicians. Some see an opportunity to market themselves as providers of a town forum, creating interactive arenas -- stamped with their brand name -- in which people can gather (Riley, 2000).

Will these interactive elements actually increase political participation where it counts -- at the ballot box or precinct caucus site? Hard to say. One recent look at the interactions among mass communication, interpersonal communication and community integration as predictors for political participation indicated that although the relationships among the three are complex, both newspaper news and interpersonal discussion seemed to have an impact on voting or other institutionalized forms of civic involvement (McLeod, Scheufele and Moy, 1999). More work remains to be done on what happens when a traditionally mass communication function, such as news, and a traditionally interpersonal one, such as political discussion, come together in a single quasi-mediated space.

This study, then, explores how these conflicting views about the value of interactivity and, more broadly, the newspapers' political role online, are evolving in coverage of the 2000 presidential election.

METHOD

All Iowa newspapers with a portion of their Web site devoted specifically to coverage of the 2000 caucus were included in this study. Newspapers that merely included caucus items in their news section were not included because of the desire to focus on publications allocating online resources specifically to political coverage rather than folding it into their generic Web presence. National publications, as well as regional papers based outside the state, were not included in order to concentrate on papers for which the caucus was a local community event.

To identify potential subjects and ensure that no Iowa dailies with a Web presence were overlooked, three lists of online newspapers were consulted: the ones provided by *American Journalism Review* (ajr.newslink.org/ianews.html), *Editor & Publisher* (emedia.mediainfo.com/emedia) and

Newspapers Online (newspapers.com/npcom1.htm). Each Iowa newspaper site was then checked in December 1999, approximately six weeks before the January 24 caucus, to see if it contained a section devoted to the caucus. This process yielded five candidates for study:

* The Cedar Rapids *Gazette*, an independently owned 67,000-circulation daily.
* The Des Moines *Register*, the state's largest newspaper, with a daily circulation of about 163,000, owned by Gannett.
* IowaPulse, the Lee Enterprises caucus site. Lee owns dailies in Davenport, Mason City and Muscatine, Iowa; the site was produced primarily by staff at the *Quad City Times*, a 53,000-circulation daily in Davenport.
* The Sioux City *Journal,* a 48,000-circulation daily owned by Hagadone, which offered an "Issues and Politics" section that contained information about the caucus mixed in with state and local government items.
* The Waterloo *Courier*, a 47,000-circulation daily owned by Howard (Editor & Publisher, 1999).

Because of the desire to explore the uses of interactivity on political sites, and with the expectation that one way in which the newspapers' Web and print products would differ would be the inclusion of online discussion groups, two other Iowa caucus sites were studied. The goal was to obtain comparative information, especially about the amount of participation in such online discourse. These were discussion groups provided by Yahoo! (clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/iowapoliticalhotline) and by E-Democracy (www.e-democracy.org/ia). The Web offers many other political discussion areas, but these were the only ones found in December 1999 that were dedicated exclusively to presidential politics in Iowa.

Once the research subjects were identified, the researcher gathered data from each of the seven sites on each of six Mondays: the four Mondays preceding the caucus (December 27 and January 3, 10 and 17), caucus day itself (January 24), and the Monday after the caucus (January 31). The December 27 data served as a baseline, with most of the analysis relating to the study concentrated on the five Mondays in January. A detailed record was made of the content in each site's caucus section for each date. Content was then categorized as either interactive (incorporating input from users) or non-interactive (offering "one-way" information only) for purposes of analysis. Participation over the previous week in interactive features such as polls or discussion groups was recorded; for instance, a record was made of all postings to caucus-related message boards since the last round of data collection.

Following this phase of data collection, the editors of each of the online newspaper sites were interviewed about their caucus coverage. Three of the interviews were conducted by phone and two in person. The interview questions focused on what editors saw as their paper's online role in the political arena and what they believed they had learned from their caucus coverage. The interviews especially sought to elicit discussion about the interactive aspects of their sites.

FINDINGS

This was an exploratory study, designed to identify the nature of online caucus coverage by these newspapers, as well as to probe editors' conceptualization of their online products. The findings drawn from the sites themselves are discussed first, followed by the editors' commentary about those sites. (When the editor's explanations of certain features are helpful to understanding them, they have been incorporated in the content descriptions.) **Appendix A** provides a table of features and indicates which newspaper sites contained the interactive and non-interactive content elements discussed below.

Non-interactive content

Two types of non-interactive content were found in all five online newspapers in this study. The first was a daily serving of caucus "shovelware": headlines and stories generated by print staffers that also appeared (sometimes with changes in headlines to fit different space requirements) in the day's print product.[2] The second was shovelware, too, but in a form that offered an element of enhanced value for users: archives. All five papers provided free access to previous news stories about the caucus, available from a list of either plain headlines or heads plus leads. These archives extended back for several months -- even years, in one case. The *Gazette*, the only one of the five papers to have had a Web site up and running in time for the 1996 presidential race, offered not only a "Caucus 2000 News Journal" with every story going back to January 1999 but also a complete archive of stories from its 1996 coverage.

The newspaper sites provided a variety of additional background information that could not be economically printed every day in the paper but could remain accessible as an online reference source indefinitely. For instance, all except the Sioux City paper provided profiles or mini-biographies for each of the candidates. The *Register* and IowaPulse provided separate archives of issue-related stories, as well, offering users the ability to pursue information related to a specific issue, such as abortion or foreign policy. Although they differed somewhat in their approach -- the *Register* linked to one to three previous stories about that topic plus a discussion board if one were available, while IowaPulse provided articles detailing each candidate's stand on the issue -- both allowed users to pursue information about a particular topic, something not as easily done by tracking stories in a daily newspaper.

The Iowa newspapers studied here also used hyperlinks to supplement their own material, a capability obviously unique to the online medium. The *Register, Journal* and IowaPulse linked to national news sources, such as CNN (with which the *Register* had a reciprocal arrangement) or to information about the New Hampshire primary, held eight days after the caucus. Other sites toward which users of these five papers were steered included political party sites, official candidate sites and government sites.

Various other non-interactive features were offered by the newspapers in this study, with the Lee papers' site and that of the Des Moines *Register* demonstrating the most initiative in this area. Both these organizations commissioned separate scientific polls of the electorate and provided extensive poll results on their caucus Web sites. These two papers also both provided campaign calendars throughout the period leading up to the caucus, showing where various candidates or their spokespeople would be appearing.

The *Register* was alone in offering a "photo gallery," an archive of images of presidential candidates as they stumped their way across the state, from sweaty days shaking hands at the state fair in August to frigid January nights chatting in town halls and living rooms. It was alone in providing campaign finance information, partly through a link to a searchable database provided by Public Disclosure and partly through a staff-generated snapshot, which provided information current through September 1999. The capital city newspaper also had the greatest access to the candidates and was able to offer stories transcribed from one-on-one interviews with all the major candidates. (IowaPulse also was able to interview Al Gore and George W. Bush; the Sioux City *Journal* offered an interview with Gore, based on his visit to that city.) The IowaPulse site offered a couple of unique online sections of its own, including news updates organized by candidate and features profiling a variety of Iowa people and communities. IowaPulse was the only one to offer an "About Us" link directly from its caucus site.

As the caucus date approached, additional content appeared on the newspaper sites. For instance, the papers in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines and Waterloo provided precinct-by-precinct caucus locations. The *Register*, which sponsored a Democratic candidate debate on January 8 and a Republican one on January 15, teamed up with a company called FasTV.com to provide an archive of video clips from those debates; users could search by candidate or issue, or simply watch selected highlights. The *Register* also posted its editorial endorsements. Four of the papers kept the site updated on caucus day itself. IowaPulse updated its home page several times during the day with fresh stories from both staff and wire service reporters. The Cedar Rapids *Gazette* offered stories on turnout and profiles of caucus-goers. The Sioux City *Journal* also provided several postings during the day, based on e-mail "briefs" filed by the paper's Des Moines reporter; in addition, the *Journal* updated its site with local "color" and early results in the evening. The Des Moines paper posted caucus results to its Web site throughout the evening, thanks to staffers stationed at party headquarters. In the words of the *Register's* online editor, the results came "out of the mouth of the party leader on the platform, to my assistant, to my fingers -- just like that!"

One footnote to the non-interactive features offered on these caucus pages involves the presence of advertisements. Make that advertisement, in the singular. Republican Steve Forbes was the only candidate to purchase an ad -- and he bought one on each of these newspaper sites. That meant his name was prominently displayed on the caucus pages of IowaPulse and the Des Moines *Register*, as well as on the main home pages of the other three newspapers. Forbes wound up second to Texas Governor George W. Bush in Iowa, drawing about 30 percent of the vote to Bush's 41 percent (Arizona Sen. John McCain did not campaign in Iowa). However, despite spending an estimated $30 million-plus on his 2000 campaign, he failed to garner enough widespread support to remain in the race, dropping out in early February.

To summarize the non-interactive caucus content on these newspaper Web sites, all five went beyond simple "shovelware" in at least some respects. Even the smallest added depth through archives and external links, and two of the sites -- those of the Des Moines *Register* and Lee Enterprises' IowaPulse -- provided extensive information and a variety of resources unique to the online product, from video clips to voter profiles. In doing so, they took advantage of the medium's capacity for depth and breadth, as well as the ability to provide multimedia content clearly impossible in a print format.

Interactive content

Four of the five newspaper sites -- all except the Waterloo *Courier*, the smallest of the five -- provided caucus-related forums or discussion groups. These merit closer observation because they get to the heart of newspapers' exploration of a significantly different role in this new medium. But first, it is worth noting the other uses of interactivity explored by the newspapers in this study.

Perhaps the most ambitious foray into taking advantage of the two-way nature of the medium came from IowaPulse, which set up separate real-time chats with Democrat Al Gore and Republicans Gary Bauer, Bush and Forbes. While the actual chats took place in the fall and early winter of 1999, the transcripts remained available through the caucus. During the times designated for each chat, users were able to type in questions, which were quickly screened by the IowaPulse editor, then forwarded to the candidate. Responses appeared within minutes. Participants in the chat with Gore were Eastern Iowa high school students; the vice president fielded a total of six questions on topics ranging from his opposition to school vouchers to his plans for the budget surplus. The other chats were open to all participants; Bauer handled 11 questions, Forbes 10 and Bush five. Online, of course, it is difficult to tell whether it is really the candidate answering the questions or one of his staffers. However, the Bush campaign addressed that ambiguity by subsequently forwarding a photo of the governor sitting at a computer in his Austin mansion, apparently typing responses to the folks back in Iowa during his chat session on December 15.

The *Register* also experimented with real-time chat, in a somewhat different fashion. It invited users to "take part in an experiment in civic participation" during the Democratic and Republican debates.

This effort, a joint offering of the *Register*, Harris Interactive and Talk City Inc., combined live streaming video, online polling and discussion among participants about the debates. Participation, however, was "not all that great," according to the *Register*'s online editor. Both debates were held on Saturdays that dawned sunny and remarkably warm for January in Iowa -- and they took place at the same time as major college basketball games. "Civic participation" fared poorly against the competition.

The Cedar Rapids *Gazette* and IowaPulse took a different approach to online polling. They offered an ongoing poll of their users' preferences, providing instant running totals once a "vote" was cast. (Both were set up so that a user could vote only once.) IowaPulse offered five questions, of which two involved presidential preference and three were related to the caucus process. The *Gazette* simply asked users to vote for a candidate, with one poll for Democrats and another for Republicans. (The Sioux City *Journal* also offered an online poll -- but because it did so by linking to a national service provided by Common Mind, no poll questions related to presidential politics appeared until **after** the Iowa caucus. Through the January 24 caucus day, the top poll question was "Who is your favorite NFL team?")

Participation in these online caucus polls ran into the thousands for both sites. However, the online "results" were wildly different from the actual caucus results. By caucus day, a total of 1,296 users had responded to the IowaPulse question "Who is winning the GOP debates?" Their favorite? Alan Keyes, who had almost twice as many "votes" (456, or 35 percent of the total) as Bush, his nearest competitor (244, about 19 percent). In actual caucus voting that night, Keyes captured 14.3 percent of the Iowa GOP vote, compared with Bush's winning 41.1 percent. On the Democratic side, 620 online "voters," 47 percent of the total, said they would support Sen. Bill Bradley, with 673 going for Gore; in reality, Bradley captured just 35 percent of the caucus vote to Gore's 63.4 percent.

Results of the *Gazette* poll, which drew considerably more responses, was a bit closer to the mark on the Democratic side (Gore captured 4,133 votes, or 68 percent of the online total, to Bradley's 1,940). But on the Republican side, the poll was swamped in its early stages by supporters of Keyes and in its later stages by supporters of Elizabeth Dole (who had withdrawn from the race in October); she "won" with 2,452 of the online 8,619 votes (28 percent) to Bush's 1,508 (17 percent). Third place went to Pat Buchanan, who switched over to the Reform Party in October but still captured 16 percent of the *Gazette*'s online GOP voters. By caucus day, Keyes was fourth online, with 13 percent of the vote -- but actual second-place finisher Forbes was trounced online, getting only 3 percent of the vote compared to his 30 percent in real life. (Keyes' strong early online showing, the result of a concerted effort by his supporters, drove some *Gazette* readers nuts, the paper's online editor said. They wrote in demanding that the poll be taken down because it was so skewed. "There's a level of, `if it's online, it's true,'" he said.)

The online papers in this study experimented with other interactive features in their caucus coverage, as well. The *Register* and IowaPulse offered a quiz, which posed such questions as this one from the *Register*: "If George W. Bush is elected president, he and his father will become the second father-son combination both elected president. Who was the other?"[3] IowaPulse, the *Gazette* and the *Journal* all offered a search function from their caucus pages. The Journal provided a link to the "E-ThePeople Interactive Town Hall" site, which encouraged its users to generate and sign petitions and to become active in issues of politics and governance. The *Gazette* encouraged users to comment on stories on its Web site through a "Talkback" feature. Although sports stories generated by far the most response from users, the occasional political exhortation appeared; for instance, one user (who lived in California, according to his post) took a caucus-day opportunity to urge Iowans to vote for, yes, Alan Keyes. And all five newspapers offered e-mail links to the paper and/or to individual staff reporters and columnists.

Of most interest because of their potential for truly engaging citizens in political discourse, however, are the online forums. As mentioned, the *Gazette, Journal, Register* and IowaPulse all offered these discussion groups; for purposes of usage comparison, two non-newspaper forums devoted to the Iowa caucus, from Yahoo! and E-Democracy, also were examined. **Appendix B** shows the amount of participation these boards generated in January 2000. Before discussing these findings, a quick explanation of the formats of these boards is in order because they varied from site to site.

Cedar Rapids *Gazette*: The *Gazette* revamped its online product in late 1999. One result was that the political discussion groups became separated from the "Iowa Caucus 2000" section of the site; they became part of a general discussion section titled "Your Two Cents," which was accessible from the paper's new "fyiowa.com" page, a local portal site. This revamped site was a joint effort of several Gazette company holdings, including the newspaper and its sister television station, ABC-affiliated KCRG. Political topics were not separated from general news ones in the lists of available topics; the author has made a judgment about which were relevant to the campaign.

Des Moines *Register*: The *Register* offered a separate section, linked from its main caucus page, devoted to "Campaign 2000 Forums." In addition, access to selected forums was provided from a menu of stories in the caucus site's "Exploring the Issues" section where appropriate. For instance, the menu of stories about the issue of gun control included a link to the forum on that topic. Some topics under the "Forums" banner were proposed by the site's online editor, while others were started by users.

IowaPulse: The Lee Enterprises' caucus site offered a link to a section called "TalkBack," which offered three discussion topics at any given time. A discussion about the GOP debates (which became a discussion of Republican candidates in general) and one titled "Gore v. Bradley" remained available throughout the study period. A forum about abortion, which generated only four comments from its posting in late October through caucus day, was replaced after the caucus by one titled "What did we learn from the 2000 caucuses?"

Sioux City *Journal*: The *Journal* offered discussion forums (as well as polls) through software provided by a site called "Common Mind." The *Journal*'s editor acted as a sysop in terms of creating seed messages specific to perceived interests of his users, but the format of the boards was set and maintained by Common Mind. A menu of forum topics was accessed from a "Discussion" button at the top of the *Journal*'s "Issues and Politics" section, which encompassed its caucus information. (A "Live Chat" option also was offered, but was never in use during the Mondays on which data for this study were gathered.)

E-Democracy (Iowa) and **Yahoo! "Iowa Political Hotline" Club**: Both sites were open-ended discussion forums about a general topic -- in this case, the Iowa caucus -- in which users simply started new discussion "threads," or topics, or responded to previous threads. The E-Democracy forum (which uses a similar format to the original E-Democracy group, based in Minnesota) included a description that stated the forum was "for Iowa caucus attendees to discuss and share candidate information and issues before the presidential caucuses. Those from outside Iowa can lurk, but should create a forum in their own state for similar discussions." The Yahoo! club site provided a location and format allowing online users to establish discussion areas. This one, titled "Iowa Political Hotline, was started by the people behind a site bearing the same name and produced by Heartland Communications, an Iowa publishing company.

As Appendix B shows, user participation in the newspaper-sponsored forums in January 2000 was not exactly overwhelming. Even the *Register*, which by January 31 was offering 24 different topics for discussion on its "Campaign 2000 Forums" page, generated a total of only 71 messages during the month -- slightly more than half the number generated during the same period by the E-Democracy board. (Most of the conversation on the *Register*'s boards was generated around the time of the Republican "straw poll" in August, a non-binding, unofficial "beauty pageant" among GOP candidates.) In fact, only one of its topics -- about the merits of Ambassador Keyes -- generated more than a dozen messages all month.

The newspaper sites that kept political discussion options to only a handful of topics seemed better able to concentrate user interest in at least one of those topics. For the *Gazette*, a January 6 "seed" message asking "If the Iowa caucuses were held today, which presidential candidate would you vote for, and why?" generated 29 messages, about three-fourths of the total political postings during the month. For IowaPulse, a forum about the relative merits of Bradley and Gore generated 45 posts, also 75 percent of the site's total political discussion board "traffic" in January. And for the *Journal*, a heated discussion sprang up about a series of controversial anti-immigration ads that ran in Iowa newspapers during the month, urging Iowans to vote for candidates who favored restricting immigration to the United States. That topic generated 65 messages -- all but six of the postings in all *Journal* political boards in January.

While a few users appeared regularly on each of the boards, participation in these political discussions was not dominated by a vocal minority to the exclusion of everyone else. The most vociferous contributor posted 25 messages to the *Register*'s political boards (of which 12, back to back on the same day, related to Keyes' campaign) in January; however, 18 other people accounted for the remaining 46 messages during the month. (One Buchanan supporter attempted to post the same two-part message to almost every board; his postings were removed by the online editor, the only evidence on any of these boards that action was taken to curb perceived abuse. The IowaPulse editor said he did not have to "blip out" anything on the political boards, and the *Register* editor described the people in the news forums as "pretty civil. It's the kids in sports who pose the most problems.") Other newspapers' boards were even more democratic -- or, arguably, less engaging. Some posters were clearly hopping on to state their own opinion, then going away again before anyone could engage them in discussion about it. Perhaps, as the IowaPulse editor suggested, "people aren't so much interested in dialogue as in displaying their monologue." The *Journal*'s discussion group about immigration ads, for instance, drew comments from 40 unique individuals in a single week, with no one contributing more than three messages and most contributing only one. Similarly, the "Gore v. Bradley" forum on the IowaPulse site drew 25 unique users, while the discussion of voting preferences offered by the *Gazette* drew 14 unique users -- though three people did account for 15 of the 29 messages posted to that board in January.[4]

Of the two non-newspaper discussion groups included here for comparison, one generated too little discussion to be useful. Only five messages were posted to the Yahoo! club in January, four of them by the same guy, who identified himself as a libertarian from Waterloo. His messages consisted of efforts to start up a conversation on the board; after about a week of talking to himself, he gave up. The only other post was from a self-identified Illinois resident with questions about caucus results. The E-Democracy group, on the other hand, generated 123 messages during January from 46 unique users, of whom two, including the most active poster with 19 messages, were board "managers."

Editor interviews

After the caucus, and after the data described above were collected, interviews were conducted with the people in charge of the five newspaper sites studied here. The goal was to determine what they took away from their experience in covering a local political event of national significance in an online medium, something all but the Web staffers at the *Gazette* were doing for the first time. In particular, the author sought to explore with the editors the ways in which they perceived their online role and online product to be different from their print role and product.

Although all of the editors expressed interest in pursuing the interactive capabilities of the online medium, most had more to say about the information they provided. The online editor at the *Register*, for instance, expressed pride at being able to provide timely information on caucus night and hope that the next time around, the paper's Web site would be able to provide more breaking news during the campaign. To do so would be relatively easy, he pointed out; the *Register*'s reporters were out covering the campaign anyway, and all it would take would be a phone call to the online side to report, say, how a candidate worked the crowd at the Dixie Diner in Norfolk, Iowa.

Perhaps not so easy as all that, however. As the woman in charge of the Waterloo *Courier*'s site said, the staff at small to mid-sized papers such as hers is "still devoted to creating your print product." Changing that mind set would be a lot harder than simply putting some Web pages online. At the Sioux City *Journal*, just slightly larger than the *Courier*, the online editor felt lucky to be able to work with a political reporter who was enthusiastic about the online medium -- especially after she was quoted by C-Span and CNN, whose reporters told her they saw her stories on the Web. "You can really expand your own name brand recognition online," he said. As more reporters see the benefits, they will fear the medium less and seek to become involved in it more, he predicted. Instead of a newspaper, they will become accustomed to producing a news stream, a product that changes throughout the day. In the meantime, the Web has yet to fully become a part of newsroom cultures and routines.

The newspaper itself, as well as its staffers, can expand name recognition online, of course, especially during events such as the Iowa caucus that draw national attention. The 48,000-circulation *Journal*, for instance, counted 134,000 unique viewers in January -- and as many as 170,000 during the GOP straw poll in August. The *Register* generated so much usage on caucus night that the newspaper's servers, located in Virginia, crashed, shutting down the site briefly until they could recover. The 163,000-circulation *Register* broke the16 million-hit mark in January, a month in which the page views for news content (which included the caucus site) saw a 71 percent increase, according to its online editor.

Obviously, not all of that usage was generated by Iowans.[5] One difference between a newspaper's print and online role is in the nature of the audience it serves. The local audience may go elsewhere -- and conversely, a national audience may seek you out. "The biggest thing we learned was that we entered Caucus 2000 with the assumption that the Iowa caucus was the possession of Iowa, or that it was local or state news. And it wasn't. It was a national story, and people did not look to the local news source as having any particular insight over the national," said the online editor in Cedar Rapids. "What we did provide is a local context, through our political reporters and our columnists, with whom our audience is familiar. That's something the networks or any other medium could not do."

On the other hand, the *Register's* editor, who saw his site as a "one-stop shop for anything you wanted to know about the candidates while in Iowa," said traffic reports indicated much of the usage was from outside the state -- including from news organizations such as CNN and the *Washington Post*. Indeed, the political coverage may well be what is drawing them in; he said he did a count in December of the political content the *Register* offered online and realized that it was generating the same amount of traffic as all the other news content combined. For a smaller paper such as Sioux City's, which does not have national name recognition, politics can serve a "crossover" function between the print and Web products, its online editor said. The print paper focuses on the local community, while the online one can connect users to major national news, as well.

But for most of the papers studied here, the print product drove the online one. That was the case because of staffing; staff sizes at these online products ranged from no full-time online staffers at IowaPulse or the Waterloo *Courier* to about half a dozen staffers at Cedar Rapids and Des Moines. It was the case because of mind set and the emphasis on the traditional, revenue-generating print product. And it was the case because of the way most of the online editors perceived their product: as a way of enhancing the foundation provided in print. Not only the content itself but also the ideas from which it evolved originated in print and moved online.

The exception, at least at the conceptual level, was at IowaPulse, the Lee Enterprises site. The online editor of IowaPulse saw the site's role as different from the newspaper's role. His goal, he said, was to "create an arena of interactivity within Iowa -- Iowans talking with Iowans." And once the level of discourse was elevated and the arena created, the next step was "to fill the stands with a national audience." For IowaPulse, the interactive capabilities of the medium were seen not as an add-on to the print product but as a good place to start. In a way, the role of the product is the same in both formats: to make better voters. But the medium facilitates different ways of doing that. In print, it's primarily about providing information. Online, there are other opportunities. "You're a better voter if you have a chance to hear what other people are thinking and how they're processing it," he said. A union member for Gore, for instance, might want to see what other union members think -- and even find those people to be more trustworthy as sources than the people quoted in the newspaper. In any event, providing the opportunity for such discourse gives voters authority, as well as a connection with others facing the same decisions.

This is not to say that the other editors did not consider interactive features such as polls and, especially, discussion groups important. Certainly, they did. "I have a great interest in participation. It's the biggest reason I've changed my career into the Internet field," said the online editor at the *Journal*, who has a background in publication design and marketing. The *Gazette*'s online editor commented on the "Talkback" feature's ability to generate one-on-one dialogue about politics: "We were actually serving as the medium between two readers, something the newspaper can't do," he said. While much of that conversation was more passionate and "less thoughtful" than printed letters to the editor, it also served a valuable role in and of itself. "There can be enormous entrée into the marketplace of ideas, without feeling that you have to legitimize," he said, citing both the immediacy and the anonymity of the medium as enticing some users into online conversation. The *Register's* online editor said that while he saw his role as similar to that of a print editor -- selecting what goes online and how to package and present it -- he enjoyed keeping the fires stoked under the forums and watched out for ways to "ask some provocative questions, get (the discussion) going again." At Waterloo, the Webmaster expressed misgivings about discussion groups because of the amount of monitoring she feared they would require, but the idea of issue polling or providing e-mail links to candidates and government leaders appealed to her.

Nor is it to say that at IowaPulse, the need for solid journalism was unimportant. In addition to the stories from the paper that the site provided, its editor (who also serves as city editor of the Davenport newspaper) wished for more trend stories, issue stories, enterprise stories -- "sad or wildly celebratory or emotional stories from the campaign." Indeed, one of the goals this time around, he said, was to use the caucus site as a learning experience for the print reporters about what sorts of journalism works online and what synergies can be nurtured. Another was to find out from users what worked for them, to gather cues that could be interpreted and, where appropriate, turned into relevant content, in print or online or both. The relatively low level of use of the interactive features, particularly of the places for users to express their opinions, made such cues harder to find.

Some already are trying to work out ways to drive more usage, primarily through promotion in the print product. Doing so also is a way to deal with another issue: the fact that what interactivity did occur was clearly not limited to "Iowans talking to Iowans." For instance, until Buchanan abandoned the Republicans, his site contained a link to the *Register*'s caucus site that brought a lot of his supporters nationwide onto the boards, its editor said. The Sioux City *Journal* online editor pointed to the discussion about the anti-immigration ads, the political issue that generated the most usage on his boards, as an example. Discussion on the boards, he said, was overwhelmingly in favor of the ads, while calls in to the newspaper were overwhelmingly opposed to them and to what many perceived as their not-too-subtle racist overtones. "We were getting a lot of outside influence there," he suggested.

DISCUSSION

What these editors' conceptualizations of, and experiences with, the relationship between the online and print products suggest is that many questions remain unanswered about how the two can or should work together. While the numbers of people seeking online information continues to rise, it is not yet clear what their hot buttons are. The medium's capability to connect ordinary people with one another and to provide a forum for them to express their opinions holds a great deal of potential, as various observers have been suggesting for some time. But as others also have observed and these findings seem to bear out, the reality hasn't quite caught up. Even the editors who deliberately set out to create an "arena of interactivity" for the Iowa caucus had to admit that users didn't exactly fill the stands. So they face a question that is hardly new for journalists or the companies they work for: Do you give your audience what they want or what you think they should have? In this case, what people seemed to want was, primarily, information. If the *Register*'s site, for instance, generated 16 million hits in January, then 71 new messages on political bulletin boards is an extremely meager percentage of the site's traffic, even given the vagaries in "hit" counts that make them less than reliable as usage estimates.

In response to the research questions posed here, the findings indicate that these newspapers did make extensive use of the capabilities of the Web in various ways that made their online coverage of the Iowa caucus different from their print coverage. These included non-interactive features ranging from archives of what originally was "shovelware" to detailed background material to links to external sources of political information. More significant, perhaps, was their use of interactive features, including but not limited to quizzes, polls, chat rooms and discussion forums. However, the relatively low usage of these forums seems certain to prompt editors and publishers to rethink their priorities for a medium that still consumes a lot of resources in relation to the revenue it generates. Aside from the truly committed, few local voters seemed interested in talking about presidential politics -- at least on these newspaper sites.

Perhaps one key message that online editors have taken away from their caucus coverage is that the notion of competition online is significantly different than it is in their relatively monopolistic print markets. The papers studied here saw "hits" from people all over the country. The effect was particularly evident in interactive areas, where supporters of candidates such as Dole or Keyes could make also-rans appear to be popular favorites. In fact, whether from inside or outside the state, online participants in these interactive areas seemed decidedly unrepresentative of the 146,000 Iowans who trudged through the snow on caucus night to physically "stand" for a candidate.

Moreover, even for people in Iowa, the caucus was a national story, covered in depth by national media (as well as through thousands of non-media sites) that are now as readily accessible online as their local newspaper. Those interested in political discourse had little reason for limiting conversational partners to their neighbors. Perhaps the Web provides not so much an electronic town hall as a gigantic national auditorium waiting to be filled. In Iowa in January 2000, there was "no particular reason to interact with people on the local level when you could do it on the national level just as easily," the online editor in Cedar Rapids pointed out. "The Internet has leveled the playing field that way."

How journalists will respond to this challenge remains to be seen, of course. One option, suggested by the IowaPulse editor, is to provide more "voter-based" information, to draw on the newspaper's expertise in local coverage to provide fresh news stories and columns of direct relevance to local readers. Another is to emphasize the online medium's ability to provide updated news after the newspaper has been printed for the day, an attribute mentioned by most of the editors interviewed here. Still another comes from the rapidly expanding forays into portals and partnership arrangements that broaden the local newspaper's reach, in effect seeking to give it a national presence that can, perhaps, enable it to compete with existing national media (see Shepard, 2000).

The answers as they relate specifically to coverage of presidential politics may have to wait until 2004, however; the editors interviewed here indicated that they still see their products as local ones and for Iowa, the caucus rather than the general election is "their" story. By then, of course, the medium will have had another four years to evolve, and the lessons learned here may seem like echoes from ancient history. The success of online voting in Arizona, for example -- where turnout doubled the record for a state primary, with approximately half of the 78,000 people voting in the Democratic primary doing so through the Web ("Historic Online Primary," 2000) -- may make "electronic democracy" more relevant to more people. And given what seems to be growing use of the Internet as a source of political information, particularly among the young, the decisions that newspapers do eventually make about how to cover such events -- ones that in a less frenetically competitive time were their bread and butter -- may be vitally important to their own survival as viable media in an increasingly wired world.

FOOTNOTES

1) It is worth noting that another "middleman" between citizen and elected leaders, the political party, also is having trouble adapting to the interactive nature of the Web. Researchers who looked at the parties' role during the 1996 presidential election concluded that their use of the Internet simply reinforced the existing structure of American politics rather than fundamentally changing it (Margolis, Resnick and Tu, 1997). Similarly, a British study of party use of online communication concluded that at least until public use of the medium increases, political parties in that nation consider the Internet to be "more useful as a tool for the downward dissemination of information than as a conduit for grassroots opinion" (Gibson and Ward, 1998, 32). Candidates and political office holders also have been slow to change. While every congressional representative has a Web page, many are seen primarily as tools for members of Congress to advertise themselves rather than to facilitate interaction with their constituents (Owen, Davis and Strickler, 1999). In 1996, most candidates also used their sites mostly to disseminate their own information (see Davis, 1999). This year, some presidential hopefuls received high marks for their use of the Internet (notably John McCain, who before dropping out in March reportedly raised $7 million from online users), but the sites still serve mainly as sophisticated advertising tools. However, during the primaries, some candidates did begin using their sites to "spin" results in their favor, perhaps a recognition that voters might use them as information sources (Schneider and Larsen, 2000).

2) The Waterloo *Courier*, which lost its political reporter to a larger paper about a month before the caucus, was not updated during the first four weeks of this study; current stories began appearing on the caucus page as of January 23.

3) The answer: John Adams and his son, John Quincy Adams.

4) While there was fairly widespread participation on these boards, they seemed to be dominated by males. True, sexual identity is impossible to determine with confidence online; people are free to use aliases and to try on a variety of personas. Nonetheless, unlike discussion groups or chat rooms on such services as America Online, most of the people participating in these Iowa caucus boards identified themselves by first and (usually) last names that seemed like legitimate monikers. And the Tims, Dans and Steves were far more prevalent than the Heathers or Cindys. Among the 40 individuals discussing immigration ads on the *Journal*'s board during the week that ended January 17, for instance, 12 had feminine names. Among the 19 people posting on the *Register*'s political boards during the month, four had feminine names, and they accounted for only seven of the 71 messages posted. Not only did there seem to be more male than female participants, but they were more likely to post multiple messages and to engage in two- or three-way exchanges with other males. Though detailed analysis of these gendered interactions is outside the scope of this study, the nature of the political communication encountered here does seem to support the notion that such bulletin boards are normative domains -- and that gender is the basis for some of those norms (see Soukup, 1999). A greater percentage of the people posting on the E-Democracy board used AoL aliases or other nicknames that made their gender impossible to determine; in all, 18 of the 46 either clearly were using an alias or were listed as a couple (for instance, "The Millers"). However, of the remaining 28 participants in this discussion, 12 used feminine names, including the most active non-managerial poster, with 12 messages during the month. Further mining of these data to address a range of questions would be valuable.

FOOTNOTES, continued

5) Fewer than 3 million people live in Iowa, according the U.S. Census Bureau estimates. If national demographic patterns related to age (older people are online less than younger ones, and more than 15 percent of Iowa's population is over 65, fifth-highest in the nation), income (the wealthier you are, the more likely you are to be online, and Iowa's average annual household income of $21,229 is more than $2,000 below the national average) and geographic location (rural residents are among the least likely to own a computer, and about 1.1 million Iowans, more than a third of the state's residents, are classified as rural) hold within the state, it's likely that barely a million have Internet access (see "Falling Through the Net," 1999; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

APPENDIX A: CONTENT COMPONENTS OF NEWSPAPER WEB SITES

Iowa caucus coverage, December-January 2000

	Cedar Rapids *Gazette*	Des Moines *Register*	IowaPulse (Lee)	Sioux City *Journal*	Waterloo *Courier*
NON-INTERACTIVE					
"About Us"			x		
Advertising (Steve Forbes)	x	x	x	x	x
Archives (old news, columns)	x	x	x	x	x
Calendar		x	x		
Campaign finance information		x			
Candidate bios or profiles	x	x	x		x
Candidate interviews		x	x[1]	x[1]	
Candidate news updates			x		
Current political news	x	x	x	x	x[2]
Issues background stories		x	x		
Links to candidate sites		x		x	x
Links to government sites				x	
Links to other news sites		x	x	x	
Links to political party sites				x	x
Photo gallery		x			
Scientific poll (commissioned)		x	x		
Town/voter profiles			x		
Video from debates		x			
Additional caucus-day content[3]	x	x	x	x	x
INTERACTIVE					
Candidate chat			x		
Debate participation		x			
E-mail the paper			x		x
E-mail staffers from bylines	x	x	x	x	
External link to activist site				x	
Forums or discussion boards	x	x	x	x	
Online poll	x	x	x	x[5]	
Quiz		x	x		
Search function	x		x	x	
User discussion of stories	x				

[1] IowaPulse interviewed Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush only; the *Journal* interviewed Gore only.

[2] The *Courier*'s political reporter left around the first of the year to take a job at a larger paper. News on the paper's caucus site was not updated during the first four weeks of this study.

[3] This included information about precinct caucus locations (Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Waterloo), editorial endorsements (Des Moines) and news updated during the day or early evening (Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, IowaPulse, Sioux City).

[4] The *Journal* linked to the "E-ThePeople Interactive Town Hall" site from its political page. This site encourages its users to start petitions and to voice opinions on issues of politics and governance.

[5] The *Journal* linked to an outside company, Common Mind, for its polling. A poll related to the presidential campaign appeared only after the Iowa caucus.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DISCUSSION GROUPS

Total number of postings (postings in January 2000 in parentheses)

	Cedar Rapids *Gazette*	Des Moines *Register*	IowaPulse	Sioux City *Journal*	E-Democracy (Iowa)	Yahoo! Clubs
Abortion			4 (3)			
Agriculture		55 (3)				
Bauer		2 (-)				
Buchanan		73 (-)				
Bush/abortion		7 (-)				
Bush campaign		363 (6)				
Bush/cocaine	34 (4)	10 (2)				
Bush/leaders' names	26 (2)					
Bush/vice president		19 (1)				
Caucus (general)					545 (123)	13 (5)
Caucus/coverage		10 (-)				
Caucus/first		14 (-)				
Caucus/learned?			3 (3)			
Caucus/results		Seed (-)				
Democrat debate		8 (8)				
Des Moines		1 (1)				
"Do right thing"		5 (5)				
Economic prosperity				Seed (-)		
Frontrunners		812 (3)				
Forbes				1 (1)		
Glad it's over?		2 (2)				
GOP debate		Seed (-)	10 (9)			
Gore v. Bradley			110 (45)			
Gore				11 (4)		
Gun control		610 (9)				
Hatch		21 (-)				
Immigration ads	4 (4)	5(5)		65 (65)		
Keyes		24 (13)				
Smith		Seed (-)				
Social Security		61 (6)				
Spending		9 (-)				
Taxes/socialism				Seed (-)		
Third-party coverage				1 (1)		
Visionary?		5 (1)				
Voting preference	29 (29)					
Who pulled 15%…		6 (6)				
TOTALS	93 (39)	2,122 (71)	127 (60)	78 (71)	545 (123)	13 (5)

NOTE: "Seed" indicates either the sysop or a user posted a message or question generated to start discussion but received no responses. Seed messages are not included in the totals.

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Newspaper

Talking the Talk: Expressions of Social Responsibility in Public Newspaper Groups

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Introduction

"Nothing less than the highest ideals, the most scrupulous anxiety to do right, the most accurate knowledge of the problems it has to meet, and a sincere sense of moral responsibility will save journalism from a subservience to business interests, seeking selfish ends, antagonistic to public welfare," wrote Joseph Pulitzer in a 1904 *North American Review* article defending his proposal for a school of journalism.[1]

Good journalism has always been the product of tension between editors and accountants. The eulogies for Lee Hills, who died in Miami in February 2000, recalled his legendary victories on behalf of the editors. It was Hills who taught John S. and James L. Knight to include long-term benefits to the communities served by their newspapers in the accounting process. Hills became the first CEO of Knight Ridder, which was formed by a 1974 merger, and retired in 1981, just at the dawn of the new age of information technology that brought new ways of delivering news and information. New moral dilemmas are part of that package.[2]

Today's corporate board chairs, presidents, and chief executive officers preside over numerous divisions and disparate corporate activities. At least one business consultant believes that many large corporations have become so powerful they "no longer feel compelled to consider the public interest as they pursue their goals of maximizing profits."[3]

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[1] Joseph Pulitzer, "The College of Journalism," *North American Review* 178 (May 1904), 641-80.
[2] Martin Merzer and Geoffrey Tomb, "Lee Hills, pioneering journalist, dies at 93," *The Miami Herald*, February 4, 2000, p. 1A.

Media companies are not immune from these pressures. Yet, newspaper cultures and the journalism ideals inculcated within them run deep. How robust are these cultures? Which is the greater predictor of a newspaper executive's leadership regarding social responsibility: the characteristics of the newspaper company over which he or she presides or his or her own personal background?

This paper explores the question of a social responsibility "manager effect" by measuring the verbalized commitments of newspaper company CEOs to social responsibility on the one hand and profit on the other.[4] Then it looks into their backgrounds for predictors of a relative leaning toward one side or the other. Our study is limited to the publicly-reporting companies because their CEOs provide written statements of their goals and their progress every year. These statements are readily available as a non-reactive measure of their values.

Literature Review

Fred Siebert and other scholars have noted that social responsibility theory substantially pre-dated the 1947 Hutchins Commission Report that focused public attention on journalistic behavior and norms. Social responsibility was the hallmark of crusading editors for most of two centuries. However, the post-World War II years saw a rise of technology and industrialization that fostered truly mass media. As media organizations grew and expanded, "their ownership and management came to involve huge amounts of money," Siebert said. "No longer was the typical pattern a multiplicity of small media units representing different political viewpoints, from which the reader could select."[5]

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[3] Robert L. Dilenschneider, "Public Relations for the New Millennium: Back to Social Responsibility," *The Public Relations Strategist* 5, no. 1 (1999): 15.

[4] Publicly reporting U.S. newspaper companies as of 1996 were included in this study. They are A.H. Belo Corp., Central Newspapers Inc., Cowles Communications (now owned by McClatchy), Cox Newspapers Inc. (part of Cox Communications), Dow Jones and Co. Inc., E.W. Scripps Co., Gannett Co. Inc., Hollinger International Inc., Knight Ridder Inc., Lee Enterprises Inc., McClatchy Newspapers, Media General Inc.,

J. Herbert Altschull warns of other consequences inherent in media consolidation. "The financiers – or the paymasters, as we can call them – or the group they represent will not allow their media to publish material that frustrates their vital interests," he wrote.[6] In a commercial operation, content tends to reflect the views of advertisers and their owner-publisher allies.[7]

Ben Bagdikian, perhaps the most widely recognized critic of chain ownership, argues that commercial operation of news companies is not necessarily bad, that it is certainly preferred over government ownership. "But *narrow* control, whether by government or corporations *is* inherently bad. In the end, no small group, certainly no group with as much uniformity of outlook and as concentrated in power as the current media corporations, can be sufficiently open and flexible to reflect the full richness and variety of society's values and needs."[8]

Some critics see a milestone in 1995, a year of rising concern over newsprint prices and severe dislocation within the newspaper industry. It was a year of shutdowns, layoffs, strikes, and departure of some disenchanted editors. The Times Mirror Company

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New York Times Co., News Corp., Pulitzer Publishing Co., Thomson Corporation, Times Mirror Co., Tribune Co., and Washington Post Co.

[5] Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 4.

[6] J. Herbert Altschull, "Boundaries of Journalistic Autonomy," in *Social Meanings of News*, ed. Dan Berkowitz (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 259.

[7] Altschull, "Boundaries," 260.

[8] Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 5th ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 223.

killed the Baltimore *Evening Sun* and *New York Newsday.* Knight Ridder chopped 300 full-time jobs at the *Miami Herald* and won major labor concessions in exchange for keeping alive the *Philadelphia Daily News.* James M. Naughton resigned as executive editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer,* citing "unrelenting pressures" on the newsroom.[9] Knight Ridder had dictated a profit margin increase in Philadelphia from 8 percent to 12 percent to 15 percent over two years. Naughton, now president of the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla., says he could "measure over my lifetime in journalism the changes from forty years ago when you consciously did not let these things enter your head. It was anathema. Increasingly in the (1990s) much more discussion and dialogue of the whole notion of profit margins crept into our talks."[10]

An often overlooked aspect of Wall Street's intrusion into journalism is the role of institutional investors. John Soloski and Robert G. Picard warn that as the powerful institutions focus more and more on increased earnings and higher stock prices, "this may mean that no matter how committed the companies are to quality journalism, they face enormous pressure to cut costs, which often means cutting staff and newshole."[11]

At the University of Iowa, three professors – Soloski, Gil Cranberg, and Randy Bezanson – are nearing completion of an 18-month project studying how ownership structures of newspapers affect journalistic function. The study also is examining journalists' complaints that their interests and readers' interests are being sacrificed to satisfy shareholders. "Publicly traded companies are in a vicious cycle they can't break out of," says Soloski.[12] A huge percentage of their stock is owned by institutions – mutual funds, retirement funds, insurance companies – which care little about quality journalism. Indeed, the University of California, the largest institutional investor in Gannett, owns three times as much stock as the company's own board of directors and executive officers. Institutions own about four percent of Knight Ridder and more than half the publicly traded shares of Media General, the New York Times Company, A.H. Belo, the Washington Post Company and the Tribune Company.[13]

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[9] Neil Hickey, "Money Lust: How Pressure For Profit is Perverting Journalism," *Columbia Journalism Review,* July/August 1998, 31-32.

[10] Tim Jones, "The Day of the Analysts," *Columbia Journalism Review,* November/December 1996 [journal online]; available from http://www.cjr.org/year/96/6/analysts.asp; Internet; accessed 15 April 1999.

The critics of public ownership are numerous.[14] However, some studies have produced mixed results. Philip Meyer and Stanley Wearden reported mostly negative findings in their 1984 search for malign effects of investor influence.[15] One study of nine publicly owned companies found that organizations that restrict stockholder voting rights place less emphasis on profit margins.[16] A second study of eleven groups, which replicated the first but added competition as a factor, found that increased public control resulted in more emphasis on high earnings (and reduced budgets for the newsrooms).

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[11] John Soloski and Robert G. Picard, "The New Media Lords," *Columbia Journalism Review*, September/October 1996 [journal online]; available from http://www.cjr.org/year/96/5/lords.asp, Internet, accessed 15 April 1999.

[12] Hickey, "Money Lust," 30.

[13] Soloski and Picard, "The New Media Lords."

[14] See, *e.g.*, Stephen Lacy and Todd F. Simon, *The Economics and Regulation of United States Newspapers* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publications, 1993); Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom: How the Marketers and Managers are Reshaping Today's Media* New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; John H. McManus, *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994).

[15] Philip Meyer and Stanley Wearden, "The Effects of Public Ownership on Newspaper Companies: A Preliminary Inquiry," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 48 (3) 564-577 (Fall 1984).

[16] William B. Blankenburg and Gary W. Ozanich, "The Effects of Public Ownership on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations," *Journalism Quarterly*, Spring 1993, 68-75.

But the study also found that newspaper chains with a high proportion of papers facing competition provided extra resources for them.[17]

David Demers has studied group ownership without singling out publicly held companies. He traces corporate newspapers back to the late nineteenth century, when he says the country as a whole began exhibiting "big business" corporate structures. However, Demers contends that most recent critics of corporate journalism rely on anecdotal evidence and that "most of the criticism against the corporate newspaper is more myth than fact."[18] He argues that chain newspapers are more editorially vigorous than their independent counterparts. Demers analyzed 16 studies that have examined the impact of ownership on editorial product. Seven of the studies showed chain newspapers were more vigorous, six showed no difference or mixed results and three suggested that independent newspapers are more vigorous.

Demers also has surveyed scores of American editors and analyzed the content of their newspapers. He concluded that corporate newspapers emphasized professional norms and values more than independent publishers. "Weak ties may lead to less identification with the local community, but the trade-off is that it insulates the newspaper from parochial political pressures, enabling it to be more objective or critical of tradition and established authorities." He also argues that chain newspapers are "much more tolerant of different points of view than the entrepreneurial newspaper, particularly those that are family-owned and located in small cities."[19]

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[17] Stephen Lacy, Mary Alice Shaver and Charles St. Cyr, "The Effects of Public Ownership and Newspaper Competition on Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations: A Replication and Extension," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Summer 1996, 332-341.

[18] David Demers, "Corporate newspaper bashing: Is it justified?" *Newspaper Research Journal*, 20 (Winter 1999), 84.

[19] Demers, "Corporate newspaper," 94-95.

Method

To analyze the social responsibility interest of publicly reporting newspaper company executives, we obtained annual reports for each even-numbered year the company was publicly held since 1970.[20] The primary (first) signer of the letter to shareholders in each annual report was defined as the author.[21] (See Appendix A for a complete list of the 44 executives included in the study.) The text was then scanned into a computer database for analysis using a content analysis software package called DICTION.[22] Comprised of 31 "concept dictionaries" – or word lists – used to search a text, this software also allows for the creation of custom dictionaries.[23] Two dictionaries were developed and used for this study: one was designed to measure profit-oriented concerns, the other to measure social responsibility concerns.

A class of six graduate students scanned the messages to shareholders in the selected annual reports from the 19 publicly reporting newspaper companies and made lists of words that reflected these two concepts. (See Appendix B for a list of the dictionary terms.)

The messages were then analyzed by the software to determine the overall number of profit and social responsibility words. The totals were converted first to percents based on total number of words in a message and then to standardized scores to represent the relative use of profit-oriented language (variable "ZPPROFIT") and social responsibility-oriented language (variable "ZPSOCIAL"). Standardization was deemed necessary because the two dictionaries are of unequal length and use words that occur with different frequencies in the English language. A standarized score has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The mean and standard deviation are based on all 179 reports in the sample. While profit words always outnumbered the words in the social responsibility dictionary, standardization has the effect of setting the norm to zero in each case. The balance score (variable "ZBALANCE") was derived by subtracting ZPPROFIT from ZPSOCIAL. Thus a positive value would mean that a message to shareholders was more deviant in the direction of social concerns, while a negative score would mean that a message deviated more toward profit concerns.

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[20] Our thanks to newspaper analyst John Morton who allowed us to copy portions of his collection of newspaper company annual reports.

[21] Note that executives' titles varied (e.g., primary signers held such titles as president, chief executive officer, and chairman of the board).

[22] Roderick P. Hart, *DICTION 4.0: The Text-Analysis Program* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1997).

[23] Major concepts that can be measured include "certainty," "optimism," "activity," "realism," and "commonality." Each major concept includes dictionaries for subconcepts (e.g., tenacity, inspiration, aggression, human interest, and diversity, respectively).

Researchers working on these data for a different project chose to use human coding, classifying the sentences, and they made their results available to us as a test of external validity. At the company level, the correlation between the two methods of coding was .686 ($p < .001$). The human coders reported reliability as Scott's pi = .752. Reliability, of course, was not an issue with the computer coding.[24]

Executive variables. Three executive characteristics were examined as possible factors influencing the levels of social responsibility language. These included:

Professional background: whether a CEO had served as a directing editor or associate editor, had worked in the newsroom as a reporter only, or had no news-side experience at all.

Educational background: whether the colleges or universities attended by the CEO were public, private, or both.

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[24] Raymond N. Ankney, "The Effect of Corporate Culture on Minority Hiring and Newspaper Coverage of Affirmative Action," unpublished, 2000.

Age: Birth year was recorded and recoded as age at the time of each report. Information was obtained from *Who's Who in America.*[25]

Company variables. In addition to the three executive characteristics, three company characteristics were entered in the dataset. These included the number of years each company had been publicly held,[26] the company's latest total U.S. daily newspaper circulation,[27] and total number of Pulitzer Prizes ever awarded to newspapers within each group.[28]

Qualitative data. To add depth to the study, newspaper company social responsibility (ZBALANCE) scores were listed from highest to lowest. The range was from 2.66 (McClatchy Newspapers) to –1.27 (Media General). The companies and executives in the groups with the highest and lowest social responsibility scores were identified, and additional research on these newspapers and executives was conducted to look for other factors that might explain the rankings.

Findings

Individual characteristics of companies and executives were examined to determine if there were some specific aspects of either the companies or the men and women who ran them that would predict the use of socially responsible language.

Executive indicators. Age was not a factor. Comparisons were run by decade and by dichotomizing at the mean age of 59.1. No differences were significant.

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[25] *Who's Who in America* (Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, var. eds. from 1970 through 1996). Note: Information regarding two Lee executives was obtained from personal contact with Lee's corporate offices in Davenport, Iowa.

[26] This information was gathered from company spokespersons and Web sites.

[27] Total daily circulation figures were obtained from corporate spokespersons, *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook*, and company Web sites. As such, the circulation figures stem from Sept. 30, 1997 through March 30, 1999.

Public or private educational background also made no difference in executives' social responsibility scores.

But statistically significant differences were found when comparing executives' professional backgrounds and their social responsibility language. The reports signed by those with experience as editors reflected the highest levels of social responsibility language. Those with reporting experience exhibited the lowest levels.

	ZBALANCE	N	S.D.
Former editors	+0.54	50	1.614
Former reporters	-1.44	7	0.994
No news background	-0.15	122	1.422

Because of the small number in group with reporting but no editing experience (N=7), it was dropped from the significance test, and just those with editing backgrounds and those with strictly business experience were compared with a t-test to determine the significance of the difference (equal variances not assumed). The result was $t = 2.639$, $df = 81.8$, $p = .01$ (two-tailed).

Comparison by gender was not feasible because only one woman is among the executives studied, Katherine Graham of the Washington Post Company.

Company indicators. Correlations of mean ZBALANCE and the number of Pulitzers, circulation, and number of years the company was publicly held at the time of report, respectively, proved inconclusive. As of 1996, the mean number of years these

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[28] The number of Pulitzers include those won prior to current corporate ownership; they do not include 1999 awards. These figures were obtained from company spokespersons, company Web sites, and http://www.pulitzer.org/search/; Internet; accessed April 1999.

groups were publicly held was 23 (rounded). Pulitzer prizes won ranged from zero for News Corp.'s one U.S. holding, the *New York Post*, to 92 for the New York Times Company. Mean number of Pulitzer Prizes across the publicly reporting groups was 21. The low circulation was Pulitzer Publishing, with 324,000 (rounded); the high, Gannett's 6,700,000 (rounded). Mean circulation across groups was 1,774,000 (rounded). One significant correlation was found: the higher the total newspaper circulation, the more Pulitzer Prizes a company had been awarded. Correlation was significant at the .01 level.

Mean company ZBALANCE scores also were examined by decade to determine if there were overall periods of greater social responsibility language across companies. However, they were generally stable over the time period covered by our study. Newspaper groups were classified as increasing or decreasing in social responsibility concern if the passage of time explained more than 10 percent of the variance in their scores. (See Appendix C.)

Discussion and Conclusions

The most important predictor, at either the corporate or the CEO level, of social responsibility language is whether or not the CEO had ever been an editor.
As a group, the executives who had served as editors talked about social responsibility far more than did those who had not. A background of reporting, without experience as an editor, had the reverse effect.

While the sample size is small — four executives (signing a total of seven reports) — inspection of the individual cases reveals an explanation. All four came from publisher families. When viewed in this light, the fact that they had the lowest social responsibility scores of all is, perhaps, not surprising, for they were not likely drawn to the business by idealism but by legacy, the "silver spoon." It is not uncommon for young people thus blessed to work a variety of lower level jobs, including reporter, as a way of learning the family business.

As a final exploration companies were rank ordered from highest to lowest by mean ZBALANCE and a histogram was produced. (See charts 1 and 2, page 20.) As the histogram shows, the distribution of mean ZBALANCE by group results in a nearly normal bell-shaped curve. Breaking points among the highest-scoring companies, the middle group of companies, and the lowest-scoring companies were identified for further qualitative study. The top five companies, with a combined annual report N of 55, included McClatchy, Belo, Lee, Dow Jones, and Knight Ridder, respectively; the bottom seven companies, with a combined report N of 54, included (from highest ZBALANCE to lowest) Tribune, Hollinger, Central, New York Times, Thomson, Scripps, and Media General.

McClatchy was clearly in a class by itself in terms of CEO expressions of social responsibility, more than two standard deviations above the NBALANCE mean. Given the company's reputation for quality journalism and commitment to communities, this makes intuitive sense. Second- and third-ranked Belo and Lee Newspapers, the large Texas-based and small Midwestern chain, respectively, have similar reputations. Dow Jones and Knight Ridder comprised a natural second tier. Dow Jones' senior vice president Jim Ottaway Jr. signaled his company's commitment at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference in Racine, Wis., in 1987: "It is possible to make a reasonable profit and to run excellent newspapers at the same time. But too much profit kills newspaper quality, public service, and circulation growth."[29] Knight Ridder, in the description of *American Journalism Review*, has widely been considered "something special, a large newspaper chain that put quality journalism first."[30]

On the other end of the spectrum, Thomson's, Scripps' and Media General's, and Central's newspapers are seldom found on anybody's "best newspapers" list. The flagship of the New York Times Company, which ranked fourth from the bottom, clearly ranks on all such lists, but the company's smaller newspapers do not. More indicative of the corporate approach was an incident at a recent Paine Webber media conference. In a slide presentation, the company substituted a new phrase for the famed "All the News That's Fit to Print" below its nameplate. The substitution: "Improving Shareholder Value."[31] Canadian-based Hollinger squeezes profits from small circulation papers, turning them into cash spinners, then financing further purchases on that cash flow. A journalism professor at the University of Regina did a microcosm study of what happens when Hollinger takes over a newspaper. He found that within days of the takeover of a family-owned paper, scores of employees were fired and that both the amount of space devoted to news and the quality of the coverage declined sharply.[32] Hollinger's aim is quantity, not quality.

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[29] Gloria Cooper, "darts & laurels," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February 1999, 26.

[30] Susan Paterno, "Whither Knight Ridder?" *American Journalism Review*, Janaury/February 1996, pp. 18-27.

[31] Jones, "The Day of the Analysts."

[32] Jim McKenzie, "Content Analysis of the Regina Leader-Post," [online]; available from http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/mediaown/Part2.htm; Internet; accessed 15 April 1999.

The Tribune Company has de-emphasized the status of newspapers, preferring to put its money into other types of properties rather than reinvesting profits into its newspaper operations. "The company has simply put its money elsewhere."[33]

As this research shows, there clearly is considerable variance among newspaper chains in regard to their CEOs' expressions of social responsibility. There appears to be no common thread except that chains rating higher on the ZBALANCE variable have some of the top reputations for producing quality journalism. The converse could be said of those at the bottom.

Recent work by David Loomis and Philip Meyer finds a statistical difference between the social responsibility language of newspaper groups identified with the civic journalism movement in the USA and those that are not.[34] In their analysis, public journalism newspaper groups are more statistically predictive of socially responsible language than are the individual corporate executives, indicating a historical leaning over time toward greater social consciousness at the level of the institution.

Additional research that includes interviews with previous and current executives and editors would lend greater depth and insight into corporate operating philosophies, while analyses of the types of newspaper articles run, their selection process, and documentation of community involvement would provide more concrete social responsibility indicators by which to chart changes over time. These changes and any noted trends or patterns could then be used to help develop and adapt media theories and to document professional practices into the twenty-first century.

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[33] Ken Auletta, "Wall Street Journalism: 'Content' and 'brand' replace 'news' and 'paper' as Tribune Co targets investors," *American Journalism Review*, June 1998, [online]; available from http://ajr.newslink.org/special/part1/html

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[34] David Loomis and Philip Meyer, "Opinion Without Polls: Finding a Link Between Corporate Culture and Public Journalism," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, in press, 2000.

Appendix A

Newspaper Group Executives (primary signers of annual report letters to shareholders) from highest to lowest mean ZBALANCE (social responsibility language) scores.

	Signer	(Group)	Mean ZBALANCE Score
1.	C.K. McClatchy	(McClatchy)	3.3810
2.	Erwin Potts	(McClatchy)	2.4851
3.	Mark H. Willes	(Times Mirror)	2.3926
4.	Robert W. Decherd	(Belo)	1.7789
5.	Allen H. Neuharth	(Gannett)	1.7464
6.	James L. Knight	(Knight Ridder)	1.7149
7.	Lee Hills	(Knight Ridder)	1.0582
8.	Richard D. Gottlieb	(Lee)	.9573
9.	Warren H. Phillips	(Dow Jones)	.9502
10.	Alvah H. Chapman Jr.	(Knight Ridder)	.7814
11.	William F. Kerby	(Dow Jones)	.7141
12.	John W. Madigan	(Tribune)	.6723
13.	David K. Gottlieb	(Lee)	.6180
14.	Lloyd G. Shermer	(Lee)	.4870
15.	K.R. Murdoch	(News Corp.)	.4325
16.	Donald E. Graham	(Washington Post)	.3784
17.	Joseph Pulitzer Jr.	(Pulitzer)	.3142
18.	Otto A. Silha	(Cowles)	.2612
19.	Louis A. Weil III	(Central)	.1620
20.	David Cox	(Cowles)	.0083
21.	David Radler	(Hollinger)	-.0067
22.	Katharine Graham	(Washington Post)	-.0076
23.	James C. Kennedy	(Cox)	-.0084
24.	Otis Chandler	(Times Mirror)	-.1615
25.	Michael E. Pulitzer	(Pulitzer)	-.2577
26.	James K. Batten	(Knight Ridder)	-.4063
27.	Paul Miller	(Gannett)	-.4798
28.	Dr. Franklin D. Murphy	(Times Mirror)	-.4960
29.	John Cowles Jr.	(Cowles)	-.5721
30.	Peter R. Kann	(Dow Jones)	-.6243
31.	Stanton R. Cook	(Tribune)	-.6681
32.	Robert F. Erburu	(Times Mirror)	-.7289
33.	Arthur Ochs Sulzberger	(New York Times)	-.7620
34.	Kenneth R. Thomson	(Thomson)	-.8756
35.	John J. Curley	(Gannett)	-.8899
36.	Frank E. Russell	(Central)	-1.0235
37.	Conrad M. Black	(Hollinger)	-1.0554
38.	Lawrence A. Leser	(Scripps)	-1.0601
39.	Charles T. Brumback	(Tribune)	-1.1138
40.	J. Stewart Bryan III	(Media General)	-1.2655
41.	D. Tennant Bryan	(Media General)	-1.2666
42.	Joe M. Dealey	(Belo)	-1.3126
43.	Charles E. Scripps	(Scripps)	-1.3221
44.	P. Anthony Ridder	(Knight Ridder)	-1.5793

Appendix C

Groups were classified as increasing or decreasing in social responsibility concern if the passage of time explained more than 10 percent of the variance in their scores.

1. Groups whose net social responsibility (ZBALANCE) scores tended to increase:

	R^2	N
Belo	.472	8
Hollinger	.825	3
Scripps	.229	5
Thomson	.908	3

2. Groups whose net social responsibility (ZBALANCE) scores tended to remain flat:

	R^2	N
Central	.037	4
Cowles	.000	9
N.Y. Times	.019	14
News Corp.	.098	13
Times Mirror	.032	14
Tribune	.040	11
Washington Post	.001	13

3. Groups whose net social responsibility (ZBALANCE) scores tended to decrease:

	R^2	N
Dow Jones	.148	14
Knight Ridder	.448	14
McClatchy	.369	5
Media General	.105	14
Pulitzer	.477	6

A scatterplot for Cox could not be generated because of its N of 1..

Appendix B

Dictionary Terms

Profit dictionary

- acquired
- acquisition
- acquisitions
- advertiser
- advertisers
- advertising
- advertisement
- aggressive
- amortization
- asset
- assets
- billion
- board
- business
- capital
- cash
- centralize
- circulation
- classified
- closed
- competitive
- competitors
- complementary
- cost
- costs
- cutting
- deal
- debt
- debts
- depreciation
- disbursement
- diversified
- diversify
- divestitures
- dividend
- dividends
- dollars
- earn
- earned
- earnings
- economic
- economics
- economy
- efficiencies
- efficiency
- efficient
- expansion
- repurchase
- repurchased
- repurchasing
- restructuring
- returns
- revenue
- revenues
- rightsizing
- sales
- shareholders
- shares
- stock
- stockholders
- strategic
- strategically
- streamlined
- taxes
- unprofitable

Social Responsibility Dictionary

- award
- awards
- celebration
- charitable
- charities
- charity
- child
- children
- citizen
- civic
- commitment
- communities
- community
- coverage
- credibility
- cultural
- culture
- donate
- donated
- donates
- donation
- editorial
- editors
- education
- ethical
- fairness
- family
- friend
- friendly
- friends
- goodwill
- honors
- honest
- honesty
- information
- integrity
- investigative
- journalists
- journalism
- journalistic
- local
- minorities
- mission
- missions
- Native-American
- African-Americans
- news
- provider
- Pulitzer
- quality
- readers
- reporter
- reporters
- service
- social
- society
- sponsor
- sponsored
- sponsoring
- sponsors
- stakeholder
- student
- students
- support
- teach
- teacher
- teachers
- teaching
- trust
- values
- volunteer
- volunteers

Chart 1. Highest to Lowest Mean ZBALANCE by Newspaper Group

Group	Mean	N
McLatchy	2.6643	5
Belo	1.0060	8
Lee	.6065	14
Dow Jones	.5454	14
Knight Ridder	.4859	14
News Corp.	.4325	13
Gannett	.1688	14
Pulitzer	.1236	6
Cowles	.0050	9
Washington Post	- .0006	13
Cox	- .0084	1
Times Mirror	- .3012	14
Tribune	- .6273	11
Hollinger	- .7244	3
Central	- .7272	4
New York Times	- .7620	14
Thomson	- .8756	3
Scripps	-1.2173	5
Media General	-1.2663	14

Chart 2. Mean Company ZBALANCE Distribution